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VEILED HEARTS.

A NOVEL.

BY THE AUTHOR OF


"THE WIFE'S TRIALS."

"Nous sommes si accoutumés à nous déguiser aux autres, qu'enfin nous nous déguisons à nous-mêmes."—LA ROCHEFOUCAULD.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

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VEILED HEARTS.

CHAPTER I.

‘ ———— Tell not me
Of happiness in memory !
Oh ! what is memory but a gift,
Within a ruin'd temple left,
Recalling what its beauties were,
And then presenting what they are !
L. E. L.

EVER since the arrival of the morning post, had Sir Rupert Rochedale evinced symptoms of restlessness and pre-occupation, singularly at variance with his usual grave and self-possessed demeanour ; and though, as was

frequently the custom, several hours during the day were occupied in settling matters of business with his bailiff, the latter remarked to himself, that his honour was not quite so clear in ordering, or so quick in apprehending, as usual.

As the evening closed in, this irritability seemed too strong to be concealed; and catching the inquiring looks of Lady Rochedale fixed on him, though she did not speak, he suddenly paused in his restless pacing, and, leaving the room, she heard him enter his own private study.

There, freed from notice and interruption, he drew forth one of the letters he had that day received, and, as he read the brief contents, a deep flush mounted to his very brow; and, looking at the time-piece—it was nearly ten o'clock—he hastily rang the bell.

“Has the mail passed yet?” he asked, as the servant appeared.

“Yes, sir—full ten minutes.”

“Send Dixon to me, and desire Fleming to

pack me up one full change—but I shall not need his attendance.”

“With four horses to the lightest carriage, how soon can we overtake the mail?” enquired the master, when the coachman entered.

“I fear scarcely under two stages, Sir Rupert—but”—he paused, fearing that his master might consider any hint of his a liberty.

“But what?” said Sir Rupert, in a tone that evidently showed he was not offended at the intended suggestion.

“Why, sir, we should overtake it much sooner on horseback—let alone the time lost in putting to—if your honour did not think the night too cold.”

“Nothing of the kind ; besides, if it should be full, I can but post on, then : so saddle Rifleshot, and let one of the grooms accompany me with my valise.”

He turned and stood before the blazing fire, which shone with a cheerful reflection on his

stern, but rather handsome countenance, while the strong light of a lamp cast the shadow of his tall, muscular figure, on the oak wainscoat of the room, the whole arrangement of which told of wealth; and many minor details—such as the quaint and elaborate carvings of the wood-work, both in panel and ceiling—spoke of antiquity also.

The works of the latter were especially displayed in the lofty hall, with its painted windows, its rich emblazonments, and curiously-adorned roof, as well as along a gallery of considerable extent, hung with portraits—two of which were Holbein's; and in the most conspicuous place, one fine Vandyke, the magnificent frame of which was surmounted by a royal crown. Sir Rupert passed along without raising his eyes to either ancestors or monarch—for what had they to do with the thought which, at that moment, wholly occupied him?

He hastily changed his dress for one better adapted for a night ride, descended, and re-entered the library—this time taking the pre-

caution to lock the door. Again, and for the third time, he read the letter—

“When my last appeal was so insultingly unnoticed, I thought that no inducement could be powerful enough to make me again address you. I then believed it scarcely possible that greater sorrow could await me, or that I could endure keener distress, and yet live ; but I was mistaken ; and now, pride must no longer linger by the side of the dying—resentment must not fill the heart that will soon cease to grieve and to beat—nor must sad recollections of the past, make me forget the duties of the present. I no longer ask for reconciliation—I no more sue for forgiveness—I know it would be asking in vain ; but I make an expiring effort in behalf of one who has never injured you — my helpless, innocent child. Let her not perish as her parents have—keep her from want and harm—and, for this, receive the blessing of her dying mother,

“ ALICE DANVERS.”

He folded the letter up deliberately, though his hand trembled—and then, unlocking a recess in the wainscot, applied a curiously-formed key, which hung among his seals, to the lock of an ebony case, about four feet high, and which, from the thick coating of dust that lay on the top, seemed as if years had passed since it was last disturbed. Some had, probably, insinuated itself into the wards of the lock—for, after having more than once vainly tried to turn the key, Sir Rupert desisted, and closed the door of the recess, with almost passionate haste, while a darker shade crossed his face, and his lips were more firmly compressed, as he strove, though alone, to suppress a sigh.

He opened the library door—all was ready—and, leaving a message for Lady Rochedale, he mounted and set off. But after an hour's hard riding, on overtaking the mail, he found there was not one place vacant—nor could he, at the small village, obtain post-horses. What was to be done? The guard advised him to

freshen his own, and cut across the country for about three miles, where he was almost sure to meet a west-country conveyance, which changed at a large town, and where he could readily have a post-chaise, should the coach be full.

Once more then on the road—and, after a cold ride across the moors, he gladly ensconced himself in the one inside place ; and about four o'clock the next afternoon reached London.

Exactly ten years had elapsed since Sir Rupert had visited the metropolis ; and then his knowledge of its highways and byeways had been very limited,—scarcely extending beyond the places of fashionable amusement, the residences of his titled and wealthy friends, and a few calls he had made to one of the Inns of Law.

The direction given in that well-read letter, was in a quarter wholly unknown to him—literally, *terra incognita*—and though he could have been informed, by enquiring of the landlord or waiter where the coach stopped, this

his shy, proud habits forbad his doing ; it seemed as if, by asking, he should give a clue to his intention, or establish some connexion between himself and a locality, that harboured one who still held a power over him, he would have died rather than have had known.

He was, therefore, driven to Lincoln's Inn, and fortunately found Mr. Collins at his chambers. He informed that gentleman of as much of the nature of his errand as was absolutely necessary, received the requisite direction from him, and requesting him to hold himself in readiness, in case his services should in any way be required—he drove off towards St. George's Fields.

For the first time since he had left home, and, even now, only by a violent effort, he compelled his thoughts to leave the past ; he burst away from thronging recollections ; he banished forms and scenes, which had, for years, been interdicted, but which now rebelliously made themselves prominent ; and, nerving himself to the task, prepared to

encounter what a short interval would reveal. Now, also, for the first time, did he bitterly regret his cruel hesitation—now realize all the danger and evil of delay. If—if he had but obeyed his first impulse, and started directly he received that letter, he might, by using the means that wealth can procure, have saved nearly four and twenty hours. Four and twenty hours! a night and a day! What may not have occurred during that interval? Oh! the lingering agony of such prolonged suspense! and, as his heart beat against that note, dictated by despair and death, he groaned to think that his unforgiving pride, his cherished resentment had made him steel himself against *her* plaintive prayer, and shuddered to find that, listening only to his own wounded feelings, he had become deaf to the voice of *her* touching petition.

He felt suffocated, and let down the window. Heavens! what a miserable suburb are they traversing; what mean, wretched streets they pass—sometimes so scantily lighted, as, at

that hour and in a London fog, to seem scarcely safe ; and then suddenly, at the next turning, they enter a blaze of light, pouring from the gin palace, which reveals also the moral darkness of the neighbourhood, by shining on crowds of dram-drinkers, lounging about the entry, or indulging at the bar, and adding their horrid mirth to the riot and roar of the tap-room — unwomanly women stand, perhaps stagger, about — marks of violence and ill-usage on many a face already deformed with passion — screaming, stunted, squallid children, hang to their ragged shawls, or play in the gutter ; while, further on, shouts and curses, tell of some desperate fray. Sick with disgust at these unhallowed orgies, trembling with apprehension, lest near this vile spot the cab should stop, he was much relieved when, after one or two enquiries, the driver entered a street of small houses—certainly they looked poor and shabby, but, at least, the place was quiet—and stopping before one, the door of which

was open, the man alighted, and with a—"Here ye are, sir," as familiar as if addressing a brother whip, assisted his fare to descend. He was desired to wait—and, having received ample payment, began rubbing down his jaded horse, whistling a merry air as he did so—and thinking of the nice supper, and something hot, which the unusual generosity of the 'gemman' would secure him.

There was a momentary hesitation, a clearing of the throat — and then, by a desperate effort, Sir Rupert Rochedale pronounced the words—"Mrs. Danvers?"

"First-floor front, sir," replied a weary-looking woman; but, probably impressed with something uncommon in the look and figure of the visitor, she called out—"Mrs. Wilkins, you are wanted!"—and held her flaring, crooked candle, so as to throw a partial light on the narrow and uncarpeted stairs.

And was it in this wretched hovel, that the haughty, rich, far descended Sir Rupert

Rochedale was to meet his cousin—his once affianced bride?

It was!

CHAPTER II.

‘Let thy own worth elate thee—do not base
Pretensions on thy long descended race ;
Do not, oh, shallow one ! by dead men live,
But, by thine own renown, the dead revive :
The empty vaunt of buried sires disown.’

FABLES OF PILPAY.

THE first particular mention that is made of one of the name of Rochedale, was during the Crusades, when some slaughter, of a character more than usually wholesale, brought Wilfred Rochedale into favour with Richard of the Lion Heart. But as this is not intended to

be a genealogical history of the rise and fall of any one family, we pass over, time till a rather peculiar incident occurred, by which they became possessed of the Chase, and from which, also, the land acquired that name.

It was during one of the frequent skirmishes which preceded the last great battle between the Yorkists and Lancastrians, that a prisoner was brought before the leader of the victorious party. Being interrogated as to the strength and position of the enemy, his hesitation and obstinacy at length gave way, at the threat of the summary punishment that awaited his refusal to reply, and, his tongue once set free, he gave such ample, and almost needless information, that Basil Rochedale, then a mere stripling, and attending the commander—as was quite customary, even by youths of noble family—as page, drew near to listen to these revelations.

“Now, my ban upon that traitor’s cowardice!” thought he. “I would have been torn by wild horses ere I would so basely have be

trayed my cause"—and fixing his attention on the man, he perceived that, gradually, he had approached very near to the General, and that the guards, in the eagerness of listening to his recital, had leant forward, and relaxed their hold of him. Just as he remarked this, the man made another forward movement, and, with the speed of lightning, drew forth a short dagger from his vest, and aimed a desperate blow at his interrogator, which penetrated the thick folds of a mantle, and pierced almost to the side.

With herculean strength, he freed himself from the grasp of his bewildered captors, dashed aside all obstacles, and, darting from the open tent, made for a river, distant about a mile and a half, on the opposite bank of which lay his own party.

But he had one on his track as fleet as himself—one, also, who was armed—for, with admirable presence of mind, Basil had seized a drawn sword which lay at hand, and calling to the others to follow, rushed forth in pursuit.

The fugitive glanced back; and had the youth been without a weapon, doubtless, one blow from his powerful arm would have laid him lifeless, or at least senseless; but the avenging sword gleamed brightly, as it was grasped in a hand determined to use it. The chase began then in earnest; the only hope of the fugitive was the river,—that reached, he was safe—for he could swim and dive like a fish. Basil uttered no shout—he reserved all his breath for the race. On—on—they speed, distancing all the others. Basil gains on the foe,—no—he loses—he redoubles his efforts—so does the pursued,—they near the river, they are within fifty yards of the bank, when, turning his head to see if the distance between them would justify his venturing up a rather steep place, whence he could easily leap down into the stream, the latter stumbled—it was enough—the fiery avenger was at hand, and twice did his sword pass through the prostrate victim before he gave vent to the words—

“Die, in thy sins, foul liar and assassin!”



Little notice was taken of this achievement at the time ; but when affairs were rather more settled and quiet, by degrees it became known and spoken of, and at length was told at Court.

“ Measure an arrow’s flight from the tent to the spot where the churl was slain,” said the King, “ and enclose a square of equal dimensions. We call it ‘ The Chase,’ and bestow it on Basil Rochedale, for ever and ever.”

As a mark of royal favour, this spot was, of course, highly prized ; but many years passed before Basil’s father, who had a fine estate lying much further south, did more than take the necessary steps to establish his son’s rights. Happily for the Rochedales, those were not the days of compensation ; and happily, also, land was not then so valuable as it became some centuries afterwards ; therefore, a few concessions that were made, and some trifling privileges accorded, put Basil in quiet possession ; and when he married a lady of

rank and fortune, the foundations of a house were laid.

The building, however, proceeded but slowly ; courtiers could not venture to live far from the Court ; they had discovered not only that it was 'out of sight, out of mind ;' but many found, to their cost, how true it is, that *les absens ont toujours tort*. So the foundations had time to settle, as well as all the other parts ; for not till the reign of Elizabeth was the noble edifice at 'The Chase' finished.


Briefly, then, let us say, that after much peace and prosperity, the Rochedales allied themselves to the royal party during the civil wars, when fines and sequestrations despoiled them of their more desirable property in the south ; and when the Hanoverian dynasty began, the Rochedales possessed nothing of their former wealth, but the Chase, a few additions to which some prosperous ancestor had thought fit to make. With an obstinacy that seemed hereditary, again, however, did the head of the family enter zealously into the intrigues

for restoring to the crown, a race—each successive member of which, in addition to transmitted incompetency, cherished some peculiar vice which made him contemptible or hateful, or both united ; and when the grandfather of the present Sir Rupert succeeded to the title, he found the property involved to an almost ruinous extent. He had married a Scotch lady of noble birth, but portionless ; and, strengthened by her good sense, he boldly looked at the truth, and, together, they had laid down a plan of such rigid economy, as would in due time have opened the way to ultimate disentanglement — when he died, leaving two boys, both of very tender age.

Lady Margaret Rochedale's good sense was still in the ascendant, though it cost her proud spirit many a pang, before she decided—Wilfred, at any sacrifice, must be saved from degradation—and Rupert—yes, Rupert—was to be the victim. The Chase must be freed from its heavy embarrassment, but Wilfred must not soil his hands in clearing it—Wilfred

must not taint his escutcheon by any plebeian exertions. His brother must work—his brother must dig—his brother must become the hewer of wood, the branded pariah of his race; and must be taught to consider it honor enough, if his aid, in saving the descendant of many generations from the indignity of toil, is accepted. And the work of training, in accordance with this plan, was persevered in, till Rupert was fourteen; but, though the process had been eminently successful, in impressing the brothers' minds with a conviction that there was an immeasurable distance between Sir Wilfred and Master Rupert, happily no envy, hatred, or uncharitableness had grown out of it. The boys loved each other, as brothers should love.

It may sound like a contradiction, but Lady Margaret was most just and upright in all her views and judgments, save on this one warped notion—she was also an affectionate mother; and when she bade her boy adieu, and sent him to the far East, it was not till many months



had elapsed, and accustomed her to his absence, that she resumed her usual quiet bearing.

Rupert had been consigned to the care of a distant relative, who, having been 'out,' as it was termed, during one of the numerous wild projects which ruined so many Scotch families, had thought himself particularly fortunate, that he had not been made to look over that very useful and ornamental structure—Temple Bar—then, not seldom decorated with such ghastly trophies—proofs alike of the taste and humanity of the age. This friend, Mr. Malcolm, eventually escaped to India, where the pagoda tree still well rewarded those who skilfully shook it—and finding that he was on the veritable 'Tom Tiddler's ground, picking up gold and silver,' when he learned the straitened circumstances of his widowed cousin, he offered to take charge of the young boy's fortunes.

Lady Margaret, who knew nothing of oriental phraseology, never in the least understood the meaning he attached to the proposition ; for

nothing—not even her poverty, would have induced her to expose Rupert to a degradation she had never even imagined. That he could not attain wealth without *some* exertion, she knew full well—but, whatever form of humiliation her visions had taken, certainly they had never descended so low as to have pictured her son a merchant!—a Rochdale a merchant!—and such was his destined career.

Mr. Malcolm had, by industry and perseverance, established a most extensive and lucrative connexion, and taking a real liking to the home-bred boy, who came full of home fancies and prejudices, but with many of its virtues also ; and, having no nearer relatives in the land of his expatriation, Rupert was soon his companion and adopted son. Though never able to cast aside entirely the associations of early life, or to free himself from an exaggerated idea of the duty and necessity of restoring the Chase to its original splendour ; it was impossible to mix in general society, as

extensively as he did, without having his really intelligent mind much enlarged, and greatly disembarassed of those trammelling notions of ancestry, descent, and family greatness, with which the intellect of Sir Wilfred was well-nigh suffocated.

For many years, brief and rare was the correspondence with home. Directly Lady Margaret fully comprehended how entirely her younger son had lost caste—though she bitterly lamented her ignorance and error—she wisely permitted affairs to take their course; never, however, once hinting at the return of the banished one, though still taking it for granted that he had never lost sight of the one great object of his exertions, namely, that of helping to free his brother's estate from its heavy liabilities.

Soon after his arrival in India, a most timely loan from Mr. Malcolm removed a very pressing incumbrance; and, when Rupert was about six and twenty, a noble subsidy was forwarded from himself, and a hint given that

he had now an unusually favourable opportunity of gratifying himself by a visit to his home.

But though the remittance was acknowledged, no notice was taken of his implied wish for an invitation and a welcome. Hurt, but not alienated, he continued his prosperous career; became the inheritor of most of his relative's vast wealth; and, when forty, married a daughter of one of the native princes, who brought him a splendid dower, and made him the father of a little girl—the only child, of many, who lived.

When Alice was about nine years old, she lost her mother, and Mr. Rochedale then decided on returning to his native land—this time he wrote to his agent, through whom, for many years, all money transactions had passed—they were now regular loans to Sir Wilfred, for which security was taken in a business-like manner, and by the same agency all was comfortably arranged for him on his return to England.


CHAPTER III.

‘———Pride hath no other glass ;
To shew itself but pride ; for supple knees
Feed arrogance, and are the proud man’s fees.’

TROILUS AND CRESSIDA.

HE arrived—and alas ! how changed everything appeared—Lady Margaret was dead—but before this event, she had a sort of satisfaction in seeing Sir Wilfred married—for he had so long delayed and hesitated, that she dreaded lest, after all, the merchant’s son should succeed to a title, hitherto borne only by the soldier or courtier. But even in this

matter, of her elder son's marriage, there was disappointment; for having in his youthful days mixed very little in society, because he could not compete in expense with his equals in rank, Sir Wilfred had acquired a shy, reserved manner, which made him seem prouder than he really was; and prevented a kind and gentle character, from obtaining all the popularity it deserved. Too modest to rate himself at his just worth, always fearing to intrude, and shrinking from the slightest repulse, how was he to pick and choose?—how was he to risk rejection?—so he married Katherine Malcolm, his mother's niece, who was often enough at the Chase, to have accustomed him to her presence, and set him at ease in her society. Besides the objections Lady Margaret had to a marriage between cousins, not only was Katherine poor, but she had faults of temper, which could not tend to domestic happiness; she was haughty, harsh, overbearing; but Lady Margaret had so often expressed her wish to see Sir Wilfred married, before she



died, that, when he named his choice, she offered no opposition.

One son, only, claimed their love; and Sir Wilfred, spite of the openly-expressed dislike of his wife, named him after his long-exiled, but still much-loved, brother; and when the latter and his motherless little girl came to England, young Rupert was about nineteen, a fine manly lad, with much of his father's shyness and reserve in his manner, while the pride and sternness he inherited from his mother were gradually gaining strength, and threatening to destroy much that was really noble and affectionate in his nature.

The meeting between these long-estranged brothers took place at the Chase. On either side it was warm and cordial; but Rupert's visit was very short, and, when he left, Wilfred was greatly disappointed to hear him say, that it must be his farewell to the Chase, he alleging, as a reason, the necessity of residing in a milder temperature, to which the long time passed in the enervating East, and his

evidently broken health, lent an appearance of truth.

But the fact was, Rupert was disenchanted.

His boyish recollections of home, which time had not effaced, and which distance had but embellished, seemed to him now the foolish fancies of a child. Compared with his recent associations with the gorgeous and gigantic scenery of the East—with his matured experience of wealth and grandeur, on a most magnificent scale—his memory of early days appeared as false and baseless as a dream; and he marvelled how the Chase could ever have seemed to him “a piece of heaven fallen on earth,” to preserve which, his banishment and severance from family ties had been thought a sacrifice of comparative insignificance. Nevertheless, in spite of his present appreciation being correct, he still felt the value and prestige of his name—he still fancied it was better to be a Rochedale, whose ancestors had been famous, than to be a Green or a Brown just emerging from ob-

scurity, and loaded with all the opprobrium of having no grandfather!

Another reason, however, decided him on never revisiting the Chase. When he spoke of finding it cold and chilly, the words might be taken metaphorically, as well as literally—the metaphor would certainly apply to the conduct of his sister-in-law. The kind, affectionate greeting of Wilfred, had been all he could desire—but as for Lady Rochedale, she scarcely took the trouble to disguise her contempt for the merchant relative, by whose aid her husband's property was saved from an ignominious dismemberment, to clear it of mortgages nearly equal to its full value. Far from receiving him with even the courtesy due to every guest, she treated him as one honoured in being permitted thus to prop a falling house—and such a house!—and, while in this manner wounding his pride—and no Rochedale yet had been without a full share—she inflicted a deeper blow on his sensibility and affection, through his little girl—his darling—his pet—his idolized child.

In her ignorance of all beyond her own petty sphere, Lady Rochedale spoke of Alice as if she had been the disgraceful offspring of some degraded slave, instead of being the daughter of one in whose veins flowed the royal blood of far-descended kings. This it was that rankled in the mind of Mr. Rochedale, and, had it not been for the marked kindness of his brother, it is probable he would have made her haughty ladyship smart in her turn.

As it was, when, two years afterwards, Sir Wilfred came to see him at his luxurious villa in Devonshire, he was met by the agent, through whom all matters of business had been conducted, in order, as the merchant said, that all might be made clear between them, even if it could not be settled.

From the evidence of various papers, it appeared that money had been advanced originally to free the Chase from debts, and subsequently for maintaining it, to the amount of nearly eighty thousand pounds.

“When this is to be paid, I know not,” said Sir Wilfred ; “and to this must be added vast arrears of interest, which, till lately, I have never been in circumstances to offer.”

“Nor shall you, now, brother ; I have enough without. This pretty place I have already given to Alice ; but I am now going to propose what shall be an acquittance in full. Rupert is three and twenty, Alice thirteen, and, unless you have other views for him, or he for himself, what say you to a marriage between them when she is eighteen ? Thus let it be settled with, I believe, the advantage on your side. If, between that age and twenty-one, she refuses to fulfil the contract, she shall forfeit every rupee I have advanced in favour of the property. If, on the contrary, he refuses, she must claim advances, many of which were made out of her mother’s fortune. Send Rupert to us without naming this ; and, if all appear smooth, I shall be ready to bind myself to this agreement.”

Surprised, not at the proposed contract—

such relics of feudalism were not rare in the Rochedale annals—but at the liberality of his brother, Sir Wilfred warmly expressed his gratitude, and, not doubting Rupert's ready acquiescence, at once gave his consent.

But he had forgotten that the consent of a third party was needed—that of Lady Rochedale ; and, during his journey northward, he had plenty of time to think of the objections she would be sure to make, and to try the strength of the reasons by which he hoped to remove them. One alone presented itself—to be sure, it was as good as a hundred, for it was unanswerable—the impossibility of refusing. But, at first, her ladyship did not seem to think so—at least, if many words constitute an answer, or are equivalent to a reason ; for, in the torrent of her indignant invective, all argument was drowned, or carried away. To such a height did her passion rise, that, quite forgetting she was speaking of her husband's brother, she named him with such injurious contempt, that Sir Wilfred reminded

her of this fact, and was roused to so unusual an assumption of authority as to declare, that if this generous offer were refused, the debt should be paid, even if the last acre of the Chase must be sold to do it.

Rupert was therefore invited to his uncle's house ; the brothers having no doubt of the result—and they were right—how could it be otherwise? The rare beauty of Alice, young as she was, fairly dazzled him ; while her gentle gaiety and affectionate character made a strong impression on one, from whose home these were banished, and who, amid the solitary grandeur of the Chase, and the pride of its ancestral associations, had pined for companionship—one who had yearned for something to love, which should love him in return—for Rupert had a heart, though, hitherto, no one had succeeded in touching it. It is true, it was trebly encased in pride, reserve, and a cold, harsh exterior ; for, though towards his parents his conduct had always been most respectful—a certain want of decision in his father's cha-

racter—an amiability that verged on weakness—had effectually prevented much sympathy there ; while his mother’s stately, chilling manner had, from a very early age, repressed any warmth of feeling towards her, and checked alike all ebullition of feeling, all the confidence of enthusiasm.

To his uncle, he was, on many accounts, most grateful—for he knew well what he had done for his beloved Chase ; and in his society threw off, more freely than elsewhere, his habitual shyness ; while Alice awoke in him a poetry of feeling—a depth of love which, at once, made life bright and happy.


But changes were at hand. Very suddenly, Mr. Rochedale died ; and from her uncle, who came to fetch her to the Chase, Alice first learned the strange disposal that had been made of herself. Her heart, at this time, was too full of grief for the loss of her father, for any opposition to his will to manifest itself ; and, before she had become reconciled to her

changed life, comforted as she was by the kindness of Sir Wilfred, he also was taken from her.

CHAPTER IV.

‘ They ranted, drank, and merry made,
Till all his golde it waxed thinne ;
And then his friendes they slunk away,
They left the unthrifty heire of Linne.’

IT is hardly possible to imagine any situation more embarrassing, than that of Alice for the next fifteen months. Evidently an unwelcome—indeed, a disliked guest—feeling that she was powerless to assert her freedom ; seeing, while her cheeks tingled at the sight, that Lady Rochedale considered her unfit to match with her son—and yet that the will of her father bound her to him, is it wonderful that a




spoiled, high-spirited girl should struggle against this thralldom ?

There was also much in the behaviour of her cousin, that had a most unfavourable influence on her. Rupert loved her as he had never before loved any one—he felt that his happiness depended on that love being returned ; and yet he became daily more distant, daily more reserved. Instead of finding his advantage in having Alice a resident in the same house, it was, to one of his character, a misfortune; he hesitated to seek her society, lest he should intrude ; and yet he was miserable at the self-imposed banishment, and feared that what arose from delicacy of feeling might be thought indifference. Thus matters went wearily on, with scarcely any interruption, during the long period of mourning ; when, to the surprise of every one, Lady Rochedale announced, that it was her intention to visit London, and make preparations for the marriage—which she did in a manner so offensively authoritative, that Alice, gentle

and submissive, as she was, to the least kindness, was roused to say, that though by the will of her father, her eighteenth birthday was the earliest period fixed for her decision, the latest was not till she came of age—and that, unless legally prevented, she should pass the interval with Mrs. Rochedale Bevington, by whose advice her education had been directed, and in whom her father had placed great confidence.

Speechless with astonishment at this unexpected outbreak, but much too proud to struggle for victory, when it seemed so uncertain, Lady Rochedale countermanded the order for her removal; while her niece joyfully issued hers, and, spite of the earnest entreaties of Rupert, who was now too much interested to remain passive, she scarcely gave Mrs. Bevington time to prepare for her reception, before she herself came to ask a welcome.

Much as this lady loved Alice, and justly as Mr. Rochedale had trusted to her kindness, she was the most unlikely person possible, to



calm down the angry feelings of her favourite, and help her to view her true position, when divested of the annoyances with which prejudice and passion had encumbered it. Always kind, but rarely wise to those she loved, with a want of judgment that was most unjust, she included Sir Rupert in the censure with which she unsparingly loaded his mother. Nor was this feeling conquered, when, perceiving that she could not avoid it, she invited him to her house, on his visiting London, soon after the arrival of his cousin; and though he was by this means placed in more favourable circumstances as regarded Alice, which had their influence in making him much more agreeable to her, Mrs. Bevington never liked him—neither understood him, nor tried to do so; his silence was called ill temper—his undemonstrative habits, coldness. She had no idea that real feeling is not always eloquent, and that an eagerness to please is sometimes paralyzed by the fear of offending; and, to crown all, she repeated, again and again—till Alice

began to echo the words—that he cared less for her than for her fortune.

Ah, how she wronged him ! and, probably, the simple earnestness of his conduct might have proved this ; but he was summoned to the dying bed of his mother, whose haughty spirit had been dreadfully mortified at the unexpected rebellion of Alice, followed, as that was, by Rupert's avowed determination to follow her, in spite of Lady Rochedale's positive prohibition.

She died ; and before her son could arrange his affairs, and again leave the Chase, the imprudent Alice had eloped with the gay Edward Danvers, whose handsome face and figure captivated all the daughters, while his large fortune fascinated all the mothers, of the fashionable world.

Alice had never loved her cousin ; in all essentials they were contrasts—not contrasts that agree well together, like warm and cold colours ; but they were opposite, antagonistic—light and darkness. With the gay-hearted

Captain Danvers, how differently Alice feels ; no dark cloud shades his open brow ; no repressed feelings weigh down his spirits ; no proud reserve checks the ready repartee, the witty sally, the graceful compliment. Mirth dwells on his lips, happiness looks out from his bright eyes ; and, before she knows it, Alice is fathoms deep in love.


But when Rupert's letters came, announcing his mother's death, and distantly alluding to their engagement, the truth burst on the mind of the terrified girl, and she became conscious that anything would be preferable to fulfilling this now detested contract. That evening decided her fate !

Captain Danvers had, from the first moment of seeing her, felt convinced that, at last, his wavering choice was fixed ; and, calling at Mrs. Bevington's, on his way to a gay party, he was struck by the changed looks of Alice. A deeper shade of sorrow than seemed due to the memory of a relative, for whom she had never professed affection, drew forth expres-

sions of sympathy from him, which were so favourably received, that a passionate declaration of love followed. Then came the terrible revelation of her enforced engagement, which had hitherto been kept secret from all but the few most concerned; and her evident terror at the mere mention of Rupert's anger, her ill-concealed abhorrence of the contract; all emboldened Captain Danvers; and the result of this meeting was flight and a clandestine marriage.

As to the loss of so large a portion of her fortune, he gave it no thought. She was still nobly endowed; and, were she not, his own ample means—the well-managed proceeds of a long minority—would give them, not only competence, but luxury; and with love always as their guest, happiness must follow. So they reasoned—or rather romanced.

But riches have wings; and love and generosity, in the course of a few years, made startling inroads on the property of Edward Danvers. A splendid style of living, costly



entertainments, downright waste and extravagance, soon melted away the tens of thousands which his prudent trustees had so honourably resigned to him. And then came a gradual diminution of expense, as well as a rapid diminution of ready money. Several children had been born, but none had lived; and they now seriously talked of retiring to Devonshire, and living in a small cottage, near the handsome house left by Mr. Rochedale, the rent of which would materially aid them; perhaps, also, Captain Danvers might sell or exchange, and thus, for the first time, make his profession profitable.

This was wise talk, and it would have been wiser had it been acted on; but an offer was unexpectedly made to purchase the house and grounds in Devonshire.

“And very *apropos* this is, my love,” remarked Edward; “for there are more bills owing than I had any idea of—and we had better be quite clear before we settle to our pastorals in Arcadia.”

And the truth is, that before they settled, they *were* quite clear; but they never played at pastorals—never saw Arcadia; for the whole of the purchase-money did not suffice to pay their debts!

Still a few thousands remained scattered hither and thither; there were numerous articles of value—plate, horses, jewellery—most of which were now sold; and Captain and Mrs. Danvers had been married nine years when they became occupants of furnished lodgings, in a situation of very equivocal gentility, she near her confinement, and he awaiting the result of an application to exchange for active service. But there was another round of the ladder to which they must descend—they were destined to look closely at the reverse of prosperity. Captain Danvers was arrested! One for whom he had become security to a considerable amount, had proved faithless, and had fled. Alice was frantic with grief and terror.

“Is there nothing left?” she asked, in accents half choked with weeping.

“Nothing,” he replied, “but the trifling sum I obtained yesterday for your diamond brooch: this, and the few valuables that remain, you must make go as far as you can for yourself. Leave these lodgings, my poor Alice, and take less expensive ones—only do not kill me by this distress. Let Mrs. Wilkins be sent for—in many things you will now find her experience useful. Perhaps, after all, I may be free sooner than you expect; so cheer up, dear wife—and now kiss me.”

He took her in his arms, pressed her to his heart, and gently laid her on the sofa, requesting the landlady to send for the person he had named, and who, having met with great kindness from them, had tried to show her gratitude by every means in her power.

As there was evidently property enough to satisfy her claims, she did as she had been requested; and Mrs. Wilkins, really happy to have her turn in being useful, though sorry for the distress of her benefactors, quickly came, and took upon herself the management

of many things to which Mrs. Danvers was quite unequal.

Gladly would she have shared her husband's prison ; for knowing his inability to meet the demand, he had declined the expensive indulgence of a spunging-house—but this wish he prevailed on Alice to relinquish. Two small rooms in the vicinity of the prison were engaged ; and there, in less than a fortnight after she became their occupant—her baby was born.

Shortly after her marriage, Alice, with the consent of her husband, had written to her cousin, entreating that there might be peace between them, if there could no longer be either friendship or association. To this letter no reply was vouchsafed ; and she, at that time the happy and idolized bride, who saw no lowering cloud—heard no mutterings of the approaching storm—felt satisfied that she had done her part towards effecting a reconciliation ; if Rupert continued implacable, so be it—never again would she expose herself

or Edward, to the indignity of an unnoticed appeal.

But Alice Danvers changed with her changed circumstances ; she had not only seen the cloud, but she had been drenched by the pitiless pelting of the storm—she had not only heard the thunder, but she had witnessed the complete ruin of her structure of happiness, by the dreadful bolt. Of all the gay and sunny prospects, which life had at one time presented, one only remained—the tender love of her husband—and now they are separated, and Alice can no longer have her daily pleasure of seeing that loved face—of hearing that loved voice.

Nor was this all—a growing dread had lately entered her mind, that, unless he should be speedily liberated, her eyes had looked their last on that husband, who was her earthly idol.

Anxiety, sorrow, poverty, had made more than their accustomed havoc on that delicate system ; while the privations and discomforts

to which she was exposed, when she most needed the appliances of wealth, completed the destruction ; and Mrs. Danvers felt that succour must come very quickly if she was to benefit by its appearance.

And it did come—and quickly too—for the shadow of the Angel of Death darkened that room, and told of its approach—and the flutter of its wings was distinctly heard by that wasted sufferer ; and Alice knew that she must die !

Under this conviction, she wrote that short note to Sir Rupert Rochedale, the second since distress had bowed her spirits. She entertained hopes that her husband, by the help of a relative, to whom he had written, might be set free, and that an application he had made for employment might be successful—but this last would, probably, oblige him to leave England. If, therefore, she could secure a protector for her baby, he would be relieved from a charge of no small importance, and have liberty and leisure to retrieve his affairs, and, perhaps, repair his fortunes.

CHAPTER V.

‘Think’st thou existence doth depend on time ?
It doth—but actions are our epochs.’

MANFRED.

‘——— The hearts of old gave hands,
But our new heraldry is—hands, not hearts.’

SHAKSPEARE.

THERE are some characters on whom one solitary event has an effect which no after circumstance can change or modify ; it is instantaneous ; it is permanent ; there has been no slow, indurating process, like that by which petrifications are produced — no gradual, chilling

influence, hardening the fluid into the solid ; but it is like the touch of the enchanter's wand, transforming the living, breathing, sentient creature, into marble.

Something like this was the effect produced upon Sir Rupert when he received the news of his cousin's marriage. Till that time, his character had remained unformed—now, the good elements—now the bad, preponderating ; but, except when with his uncle, he had never been placed in circumstances calculated to strengthen what was great and good in him, or to foster what was kind and gentle ;—on the contrary, the overbearing, imperious disposition of his mother, had called forth those tendencies, which the conduct of Alice at once brought into constant activity, and produced effects which for years blighted his own happiness, and that of others. Wounded in his most sensitive feelings—outraged in his warmest affections—it was, perhaps, nothing extraordinary that, for a time, ruffled pride lashed his jealousy into hatred ; or that, scorned and de-

ceived, he would be unforgiving; but, alas! these feelings were not evanescent—long, very long, did they become part and parcel of his character.

What he really felt and suffered at this ruin of his love, this destruction of his hopes, none could ever tell. If his looks were more gloomy—if his face wore a sterner or prouder expression, the recent death of Lady Rochdale might alone be the cause; for, when the year of mourning expired, he went to visit some distant relations in Scotland, and, before many months had passed, orders arrived at the Chase, for preparations to be made for the reception of his bride, an English lady of good family.

Among other directions, two were particularly given; one was, that the spot known as the 'Rustic Garden' should be entirely remodelled, and thickly planted, so as to destroy its former appearance. The old steward shook his head as he read this order; for he well remembered, when Alice first came to the

forwarded to Mrs. Rochedale Bevington ; but in this sanctum, there were many articles of furniture which could not properly be so designated, which, of course, remained. And when the steward, after some hesitation, ventured to name Mother of Pearl, and asked for orders about her, Sir Rupert almost fiercely exclaimed —“ Keep her—and see that she is well kept ;” and it was frequently remarked by this attached servant, and Mrs. Scott, the stately housekeeper, that if the beautiful animal heard or saw Sir Rupert, she came neighing up to him for the caress, which was never withheld, or the crust with which he always seemed purposely to have provided himself.

And now the order was, that these untenanted rooms were to be entirely refurnished, so as to obliterate, if possible, all traces of their former mistress.

‘ I would not have a bodkin, nor a cuff,—
A bracelet, necklace, or rebato wire,
Nor anything that ever was call’d hers,
Left me, by which I might remember her.’

very rarely, Rupert was admitted—a new book, a choice flower, a fresh pet being his offering and excuse—or, more important than all, there was a report to make touching the health of Mother of Pearl, her favourite pony, and his gift.

All about this room, were scattered tokens of the beautiful owner's tastes and pursuits. Vases, of the most exquisite manufacture that India could produce, were filled with the rarest flowers; cabinets, curiously and richly inlaid, were loaded with specimens of whatever was beautiful from countries far and near; books of engravings, of poetry, of light literature, elegantly bound, filled various recesses. On the walls were three or four paintings by celebrated artists; and an air of oriental character was given to the whole, by the Indian coverings of numerous cushions, which were heaped on low sofas.

Within an hour after he heard of Alice's elopement, Sir Rupert had ordered that everything belonging to her should be packed and

forwarded to Mrs. Rochedale Bevington ; but in this sanctum, there were many articles of furniture which could not properly be so designated, which, of course, remained. And when the steward, after some hesitation, ventured to name Mother of Pearl, and asked for orders about her, Sir Rupert almost fiercely exclaimed —“ Keep her—and see that she is well kept ;” and it was frequently remarked by this attached servant, and Mrs. Scott, the stately housekeeper, that if the beautiful animal heard or saw Sir Rupert, she came neighing up to him for the caress, which was never withheld, or the crust with which he always seemed purposely to have provided himself.

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They were to be fitted up with much magnificence, as a state bed and ante-room, for those guests to whom it was designed to offer particular honour.

When he married, once more was there a chance of happiness offered to Sir Rupert, had he known how to avail himself of it. The lady—though with some peculiarity of temper—was gentle and affectionate, and married him because she really loved him, and believed, in spite of manners that were cold and reserved, that he loved her. But Sir Rupert had yet no love to bestow, and had but little faith in woman's love, and still less value for it. The Honourable Elizabeth Stanton was, by rank, manners, and education, fit to be Lady Rochdale. He had determined to marry, in order to silence all remarks that might imply he had not forgotten Alice; and he preferred her to the many, who seemed ready to accept him before he offered. The settlements were liberal; the home of which she would be mistress, was noble;—what more could a woman,

without fortune—or, indeed, any other woman, require?

If he had asked Elizabeth Stanton this question before marriage, she would have told him that a true-hearted woman requires love for love ; that she expects companionship, confidence, trust—that she demands to share her husband's sorrows ; that she has a right to such conduct from him, as shall make it her delight to honor, and her privilege to obey him.

Such were her notions—gradually she found how mistaken she had been—and much did she suffer, as, one by one, her delusions vanished. Oh ! the ague-like alternations of burning jealousy and icy indifference, thawed in its turn by the warm affection she still felt for her husband !

The birth of a girl failed to lessen the calm, stately reserve of the father ; and, when a boy was next born, Lady Rochedale hoped an event, which she knew was greatly desired, would effect a change ; but no—though he

was ever courteous and gentle—he was never affectionate, never loving; and, when after the birth of two more sons, all went on as usual, she turned to her children, hoping to fill with their love that void which daily became more profound.

Again, disappointment met her. In one terrible week the two elder boys sickened and died—and when the first burst of grief had passed away, and while smarting under a keen feeling of isolation, an almost indignant sense of injustice, she sat down to pour out her sorrows to one whose kindness and sympathy had never been sought in vain—for the first time she gave expression to her feelings—spoke of her real loneliness—of her want of companionship—of her uncared for, unvalued affection, and as she wrote, a sense of relief fell on her troubled spirit. Then she called to mind, the length of time during which this dear friend had been to her both guide and counsellor; and remembered that when this companion of her girlhood had, some

years ago, been stunned by a double and terrible bereavement, she had still listened to, and felt for the sorrows of others.

“What is my grief, compared with hers?” was the wholesome reflection, which followed this retrospective glance. “I complain of my husband’s indifference, as the *one* thing that mars my happiness—what right have I to expect a lot which is never bestowed on any one—why is *my* happiness to be perfect?”—and, pursuing this train of reasoning, she contrasted her situation with that of many others, and found she rose a gainer by the review—she therefore decided that she would bring her common-sense to the rescue, and that if she could not be quite happy, she would try to be resigned and cheerful.

It was, however, a hard struggle ; and one in which she often failed—for she had no help from either husband or daughter.

Evincing from a very early age, an unloving, and unloveable nature, Edith was not the one to whom her mother could look for comfort.

Just as the girl was emancipated from an injudicious system of nursery training, the death of the two boys, plunged Lady Rochedale into such grief, that she gladly consigned her to the care of a governess—a lady who was quite capable of storing the mind with knowledge, and imparting many brilliant accomplishments; but who was wholly unskilled in educating the feelings, or disciplining the temper. Miss Durnsford's manners were always ladylike—they were also always cold—chilling—repellent. Truly conscientious in the discharge of all she considered her duty, Lady Rochedale had the utmost confidence in her—but much, and frequently, as she felt the want of sympathy, of friendly companionship, without attempting to analyze the cause, she never thought of seeking either from Miss Durnsford. And yet, to her she intrusted the formation of her daughter's character, certainly with some hope that the result would be satisfactory.

Who has not heard of, and laughed at, the idea of extracting sunbeams from cucumbers? Is

there no other inconsistency quite as glaring, and yet very common?

Is it, then, strange, or can it be severely blamed, if Lady Rochedale sought in her youngest child, Basil, the affection denied to her by others; and that, finding it, she should lavish on him all that treasure of love which had been rejected or repressed by all but him?

CHAPTER VI.

‘———what a true mirror

Were this sad spectacle for secure greatness !’

MASSINGER.

‘ After life’s fitful fever, she sleeps well.’

SHAKSPEARE.

“WHAT o’clock is it now, nurse?” enquired a feeble voice of a stout bustling woman, whose appearance indicated that she belonged quite to the working class, and who was roughly, but attentively, feeding an extremely delicate-looking child, and occasionally warming its cold hands by the small fire.

“ Bless me, ma’am, why it is hardly ten minutes since I told you it was half-past twelve. Why the postman will not be here till after one.”

The tone and manner of the reply were quite in character with the expression of the speaker; it was far from ill-tempered, though slightly impatient; and, lacking all courtesy, was by no means disrespectful or unkind. Had it been the extremes of either of these, it would have fallen on ears quite deaf; for the whole sense of hearing was absorbed in listening to the distant rap, rap, which told that this important messenger had entered that humble street, in which lay one, who watched for his arrival as if for tidings of life and death, and, to her, such they were.

Gradually the well-known knock approached—for the denizens of that quarter, were not of those who materially add to the revenue by their extensive correspondence—and yet how tardy he seemed to one who measured time by

the quickened and painful throbbings of her heart. Hark ! it is surely he, over the way, where the poor widow and her daughters live. The nurse rose and looked over the dingy curtains through the dingy window.

“ Well, I do hope that letter is from her son. I know how they have all longed for news, and I really believe it is, for they are all at the door, and she is crying, and the girls smiling, though they have not opened the letter ! But, I declare, here he comes to us,” and, laying the infant carefully on the bed, she prepared to descend, while the terrible pulsation was almost suffocating to that pale wasted form, lying there so helpless.

Presently a loud cry was heard, followed by the mingling of several voices and the violent shutting of doors ; but though more than one hurried footstep passed the room in which the invalid lay, none attended, when entreated to tell what had happened—most likely the feeble tones were never heard. Time went on and she was still alone. To her it seemed as

if hours had passed since Mrs. Wilkins had left the room, though a neighbouring clock, with deliberate exactness, struck two, just as the child awoke and began its plaintive cry for food.

The mother turned her large dark eyes towards the fireplace; but there was not a spark of fire left, and, after making a vain effort to reach a cup, in which there was some nursery preparation, she sank back, almost fainting. Once more the baby wail roused her. She tried to soothe the child; she put one arm round it, and gazed at the small pale face and tiny hands; and the thought, almost the hope, arose, that they might soon lie together in that narrow resting-place appointed to all, and 'sleep the sleep that knows not breaking;' and her tears fell fast.

At last a heavy step is heard ascending the creaking stairs; the door is opened, and the somewhat unwieldy proportions of Mrs. Wilkins fill the gap.

"My letter," murmured Mrs. Danvers. A sharp spasm rendered her unable to say more.

"Oh, deary me; there is no letter for you, ma'am, and unless it brought more welcome news than the one that was given to the poor young thing in the back parlour, you are better without. Why, only think, ma'am, her husband was among those unfortunate fellows who were lost when the boat was swamped at Liverpool!"—and perceiving that Mrs. Danvers turned very faint, she had the discretion to withhold the rest of the tragic recital—namely, that the shock had hastened the birth of the infant, which was now lying dead in the same room with the weeping young widow.

"But, bless me! why here is the fire out, and everything as cold as charity—deary me, deary me—sorrow and changes, sickness and death everywhere," muttered Mrs. Wilkins, as she bustled about to make things a little more comfortable, and to supply the wants of the

child, which it was most clamorously making known.

“And no letter for me!” repeated Mrs. Danvers, in the sad tone of hopeless sorrow.

“Never mind, ma’am — come cheer up, cheer up—perhaps it will come to-morrow; and who knows but it may contain a five pound note,” remarked Mrs. Wilkins, encouragingly; for she naturally concluded, that a letter so anxiously expected, by one whose last guinea was spent, and whose scanty wardrobe was daily becoming more scanty—must be in reply to one asking for pecuniary aid.

“Too late—too late,” said Mrs. Danvers, but in so low a tone, that it was not noticed; then she added, making an effort to collect her breath—“Take some of that wine to the poor woman, it may do her good.”

“Well now, that is very kind of you,” replied Mrs. Wilkins, in a hesitating manner, as she took up the bottle to see how much was left — “but I am afraid it cannot be

spared—no,” she continued, shaking her head; “there is not much—and now, ma’am you must take this sago, and a spoonful of the wine in it, to revive you—for I declare you have worried yourself into a faint. Come, try and eat it.”

With a tremulous hand, Alice raised the spoon to her mouth—dropped it, and again sank on the pillow.

“Ah! well,” said Mrs. Wilkins, in soliloquy, while she bathed the temples and hands of her dying charge — “if things do not soon mend, they must soon become worse—though that is hardly possible. To think of her dying in this hole, and the captain shut up in that other—and the poor little helpless innocent—what will become of it?”—and her looks wandered over the room and rested on the bed, on which lay Mrs. Danvers, so pale, that, but for a nervous movement of the thin wasted hands, it might have been thought death had already claimed his prey.

Drearily, painfully wore on the hours; and

had not Mrs. Wilkins had her attention drawn to the childless young widow, she must have remarked various symptoms, which all proved increasing weakness in her, for whom she was especially interested. But, besides this fresh claim on her thoughts and time, she had been trying to effect an advantageous sale of some fine lace which Mrs. Danvers still possessed ; and when this was done, and the child put to sleep, the day had darkened towards evening, and Mrs. Wilkins had just paid the last visit to the poor woman below, and thought she would now take an early and quiet supper, when the stopping of a carriage, followed by the sound of her own name, again put her in motion.

Taking the only light there was, she rose to see who was coming at that late hour, and was startled, on reaching the door, to find herself almost running against a gentleman — an entire stranger to her, who, without speaking, was about to pass her and enter the room. A slight prohibitory movement of her hand,

seemed to recal his thoughts, and the words—"Mrs. Danvers!" again uttered with an effort, satisfying her that he was acquainted with that lady, she re-entered the room, civilly inviting him to follow; and, placing the candlestick on a small table that stood towards the foot of the bed, she announced him as—"A gentleman, ma'am."

He needed no introduction, that haughty-looking man, who stood as if rooted to the spot—*he* needed no lackey to announce him, that stern, melancholy-looking guest. Alice had heard his voice pronounce her name—though low, it had sounded to her, clear and loud as a trumpet, and, with strength that but a few minutes before would have been impossible, she half started up.

Their eyes met—what a history did that look reveal! the proud, reserved man, who would have been racked rather than have owned how he had loved and suffered—in the softened, sorrowful glance, that fell on the changed face of Alice, told it all—and oh!

what a tale of woe did those wondrous eyes, his now encountered, reveal ! Still he did not move—for, though hours of deep, bitter feeling seemed to have passed, not many seconds had really elapsed. At length, the lips of Alice moved—but no sound was audible to his strained sense ; he advanced a few paces—she raised her thin hand to put aside the masses of dark hair, as if they impeded her sight, and pointing to her infant, with a heavy sigh, closed her eyes—she was dead !

Even at that awful event, the habitual self-control, which pride had so well taught Sir Rupert, did not forsake him. Even at that terrible moment, when his heart was torn by the sudden awakening of dormant love, remorse, compassion, torturing self-upbraidings, scarcely any token of unwonted emotion was suffered to appear—he made some hasty steps forward, a half-smothered groan escaped, and his face was ghastly pale ; but so composed, though solemn, was his cold, stern manner—so calmly impressive, his authoritative look and tone,

that Mrs. Wilkins experienced a kind of awe, which effectually restrained those ebullitions of grief, to which she would otherwise, most certainly, have yielded.

His commands were brief, but decisive—she was to do all that was needed; and early the next day a person, authorized by him, would come to give further orders, and furnish her with the necessary money. He left the room almost as he gave these directions; but, on reaching the door, he turned and gazed fixedly on that face which he should never again look on. When he last saw it, in all its gay loveliness, how ever varying was the expression—how eloquently was every emotion told by those speaking eyes—and how hope and happiness dimpled that faultless mouth—and now! He turned away with a shudder; and, hastily descending the stairs, entered the cab, which was fortunately waiting for him. But not even then did he give way to the full tide of feeling which almost choked him. There was still something to be done—some arrange-

ment to make ; and, directly he reached his hotel, he wrote a note to Mr. Collins, which would secure his presence early the following morning.

And now—at last—he is alone in his sleeping room ; but who may tell of the conflict of feelings which shook that strong man with a giant's grasp. See him, as he paces about the room, wringing his hands, while his chest heaves with sighs and groans, which find no relief in tears ; see him sink down exhausted, laying his throbbing temples on the table, while, at length, tears, such as the most acute mental agony alone forces out, gush forth in torrents ; and now the fierce paroxysm has passed—but he still weeps ; and, weakened by the violent tempest that has passed over his heart, he throws himself back in the chair, and for a short time sinks into forgetfulness. Had he fainted—or had he slept ?—he could not tell ; but, he was conscious of such utter prostration of strength, that he was scarcely able to rise. He remem-

bered that for many hours he had not eaten anything—he felt giddy from excitement and exhaustion, and, ringing the bell, ordered a cup of coffee and biscuits—desiring to be awake early the next day.

He fell asleep almost directly his head touched the pillow; and, though his rest was of short duration, he was now able to think and decide—able to put away recollections which still struggled for precedence—and, with much of his customary inflexibility, to arrange for the future.

Attentive to the wish expressed in Sir Rupert's note, Mr. Collins was announced just as breakfast was being removed, and actually started as he beheld the alteration a few hours of severe mental anguish had effected.

“I fear, Sir Rupert, you are ill,” was his first remark, and his last also, for Sir Rupert, hastily interrupted him, by saying—

“I sent for you, sir, to speak about some matters in which I require your assistance.”

And he proceeded calmly to state that he wished Mr. Collins to proceed at once to the address he wrote down, and there arrange everything for the funeral of a lady who died last night; this was to be done plainly, and all debts were to be discharged, for which he would draw a cheque. Mr. Collins was also to make fit arrangement for the care of an infant, now with a person who had acted as nurse.

“And the lady’s name, Sir Rupert?”

“It is with the address.”

“Pardon me,” persisted Mr. Collins, “but was she a widow? Is there no husband?”

“Of him I know nothing,” was the freezing reply; “you will act as if there were no such person.”

This the lawyer thought might be rather difficult; but, readily perceiving that his client was in no mood for explanation or opposition, he put the folded direction into his waistcoat pocket—his fingers all the time nervously longing to open it—but determining to see

himself after this mysterious commission, he controlled his curiosity ; and, after having discussed some questions relating to Sir Rupert's own affairs, he prepared to take his leave. As they were separating, by an evident effort, Sir Rupert said—

“I have no wish to hear the details of all you may think proper to do ; but, remember, at present the child has nothing beyond what I provide. I trust implicitly to your good sense and honour. I leave London almost immediately. Good morning !”

CHAPTER VII.

‘ Every white will have its black,
And every sweet its sour.’

BALLAD OF SIR CAULINE.

“ WELL, this is a curious affair !” thought Mr. Collins, as he quitted the hotel ; and drawing forth the paper, in order to direct a cabman, his eyes fell on the name.

“ Good heavens ! then she is dead !—poor thing—died in poverty, I suppose. Why, it must be the very Captain Danvers, of whom I have lately heard—I see it now—and she ran away with him ; and this is the end. Ah, well—I suppose I had better see after this affair entirely myself ; her proud, hard cousin

would not like it to be talked over by my clerks ; so I will at once put matters in train."

Prepared, as Mr. Collins fancied himself, to find a change in all that related to Mrs. Danvers, the reality far exceeded the stretch of his imagination, when he was ushered into what was more properly a back closet, than a room—the front one being now appropriated to the dead ;—and, as the lawyer glanced through the half-opened door, he perceived that the same absence of the commonest comforts characterised its scanty furniture, as was evident in the smaller room. From Mrs. Wilkins he not only learned all that had occurred since the arrest of Captain Danvers, but he received a history of the reckless extravagance which had marked his downward career, from the day of his marriage. Still, amid much—which, as a prudent man, he loudly condemned—there shone out here and there traits of generosity, kindness, and honour, which made their due impression, and converted the censure, which hovered on his lips, into an

expression of regret, that so many attractive qualities should be accompanied by such folly and waste.

It was agreed that the funeral should not needlessly be delayed, and settled that the child was to be placed with a young woman, who would gladly take charge of it; and, advancing Mrs. Wilkins money for current expenses, he ordered all the bills to be sent to him, and took his leave. Perhaps no one, not even Sir Rupert, could better understand the startling difference between all that surrounded the death-bed of Alice Danvers, and the splendid prospects with which she had entered society, than Mr. Collins. His father or himself had made all the necessary arrangements for the application of money, which, from time to time, had been remitted from India. Gradually had he seen the Chase relieved from the heavy encumbrances with which it was charged; gradually had reparations and improvements been effected, on a scale commensurate with the liberal supplies

so often forthcoming ; and it was the father of Alice who sent these sums. It was the fortune of Alice which made the Chase one of the finest properties in the neighbourhood, and yet she——

“ But it is useless to recal all this,” thought Mr. Collins, “ though I do wish I had been empowered to see what could be done for this spendthrift husband. Still it is no affair of mine ; better keep to the strict letter of my instructions. Sir Rupert is not one to brook interference.”

So Alice was laid in her obscure grave, and no question had been made about the imprisoned widower, till Mr. Collins, on the following day, received the last receipt for all expenses connected with her illness and funeral. Poor Mrs. Wilkins, who had met with an accident which all but prevented her moving, then ventured to say :—

“ And the captain, sir ; what will be done for him ? ”

“ I have no orders to do anything,” replied

Mr. Collins ; “ of course you will see him when you are able to walk, and can then tell him what has been done.”

“ And about naming the child, sir ?”

“ Christen it at once. You seem to think it will not live, and, perhaps, it would be as well that it should not ; however, I will speak to Mrs. Collins about it. And now that all is settled, will you remain here, or shall I send for a conveyance, and have you removed to your own house ?”

“ Oh, home, sir, by all means, if you please,” said she ; “ I am sure there has been nothing but sorrow and misery here ; besides, the poor babe will be the better for change.”

And having taken down her address at Paddington, Mr. Collins and she parted.

“ Well, my dear, and what do you think ?” he enquired of his wife, to whom he had related the leading incidents of the matter which had occupied him so exclusively.

“ Think !” she answered indignantly—

“why, I think that Sir Rupert ought to be ashamed of himself! I know I am ashamed of him!—a proud, hard-hearted man. And so that sweet pretty creature is dead, and buried little better than a pauper; and she his own cousin; and her money it is that enables him to live like a prince; and the husband pining in prison to gratify his hatred and revenge, and the innocent little child being killed among them. Ah! it is all very disgusting!”

“Come, come—not so bad as all that, though I have felt annoyed at many things. But what could I do? You know I cannot afford to offend a client like Sir Rupert! And if I did, it would not serve others.”

“Very true; but it would be some gratification to tell him a few homely truths. But let me tell you, Mr. Collins, though the poor mother has been laid under ground with little feeling or ceremony, and the last service been performed for her with small respect, yet her little orphan shall have the first rite solemnized

with a little more sympathy and decency. I will stand godmother, and she shall have my name added to her mother's, and Julia shall be the other sponsor. It is a little romance, quite to her taste."

"And where is the godfather?" asked he, slightly infected with his wife's womanly interest.

"Why, who but you yourself, Mr. Collins? You need not be present. I will find a proxy for you; and now you may leave the rest to me."

And, to the inexpressible comfort of Mrs. Wilkins, who had grievously suffered from, what she thought, all the indignities which had been offered to the late Mrs. Danvers, something like a respectable programme was made out for the christening of her fretful, puny infant. But, on the morning of the ceremony, Mr. Collins—who understood Sir Rupert better than any one else ever did—suggested that the mother's name had better be omitted. "Perhaps," he said, "it would remind the

baronet of unpleasant things, and prevent his taking an interest in the child, which, if it lived, he was very likely some day to do."

And Miss Julia—who was deeply read in the literature of circulating libraries, and had lately been weeping over the heart-rending woes of a certain Evelina, whose beauty was of a superhuman kind—begged to substitute that of her favourite heroine.

Laughing at her folly, and shaking his head at her waste of time, her father readily agreed to this; but the curate, who performed the ceremony, not attending to the lisping, fine-lady pronunciation of Julia, named the desolate little creature Margaret Evelyn Danvers, and so registered her, to the unconcealed vexation of the euphonious Julia, which would have been increased, could she have heard that Maggy, and even Mag, were substituted for the first designation, by the nurse and Mrs. Wilkins.

It is probable that an air of unusual abstraction and gravity, evident in Sir Rupert's manner

after his return, and a slight relaxation in the coldness of his looks and tones, might have been connected by Lady Rochedale with his unexplained absence, had not a circumstance occurred on the night of his departure, which seemed very likely to have caused this change.

Among faults of various kinds which had characterized the Rochedale family, a grasping, money-loving disposition had never been conspicuous—not even when pecuniary difficulties might have rendered it excusable, had they made good bargains, and let their land at its utmost value. On the contrary, they were not only kind, but generous—the consequence was, that they were well respected and well served. Sir Rupert, in this, imitated his ancestors; his dependants knew they could safely rely on his justice and kindness; and though a something in his character, which they felt, without ever dreaming of understanding or analyzing, checked the warmth of feeling all had felt towards Sir Wilfred, few landlords were more highly spoken of than his

son. Among those who were especially bound to him, by the remembrance of favours received from infancy to manhood, was a young man named Wilson, who, by the death of the head gamekeeper, had lately been appointed to his office; and, on the strength of increased wages and a comfortable house, Wilson married a young woman to whom he had long been attached.

Very happy were they in their pretty hut-like home, just within the noble wood; and pleasant it was to see the young wife sitting in the flower-laden porch, or busy in her kitchen-garden; pleasant also was it to follow her about their neatly furnished sitting-room, arranging all for the evening meal; and then, taking up a little cap or gown, her fingers would fly up seams, and along hems, and her naturally sweet voice burst into song, while her thoughts alternately dwelt on her kind, manly husband, and the dependant little claimant for their love, whose birth was expected before Christmas.


Lately, some daring depredations had been committed, attended with a wanton waste of property, that greatly aggravated the offence ; and Sir Rupert had expressed his determination, to leave no means untried for detecting and punishing the perpetrators. Wilson was, of course, among those most eagerly on the watch ; and, from information he had received, was induced, about the time of Sir Rupert's unexpected journey, to be more than usually vigilant ; sometimes being absent, with his subordinates, great part of the night. On these occasions, a respectable old woman from the village remained with his wife—and as two, or perhaps three, of these anxious vigils had ended in his safe return, Bessie learned to control her fears ; and though she did not go to bed, the time was no longer rendered apparently interminable by indulging in terrors or fancies. On one of these occasions she had been so busy, that her candle was nearly burnt out before she perceived it ; and rising to fetch another, she glanced at the

clock—it was past one—“Who would have thought it was so late?”—she half audibly remarked; when the report of a gun was distinctly heard. The sound roused the old woman who had gone to lie down—she came hastily, in and was on the point of exclaiming, when, hark!—another shot from the same quarter.

Bessie rushed to the door—her face white with dread, and opening it to go forth, almost fell over Speed, her husband’s favourite dog. The faithful animal, though wounded in the shoulder, seized her apron, and, uttering a long whine, attempted to pull her forward; but she had not proceeded many paces, before a group of men issued from one of the forest paths, bearing on boughs, what Bessie felt sure was the body of her husband. She stood fixed on the spot, though a horrible consciousness remained, which one of the party perceived, and hastened towards her.

“He still lives, and we have sent to the village for help!” he said, anxious to com-

municate tidings rather less terrible than those she evidently anticipated. Poor thing! the faint hope which these words awoke, was soon destroyed on the arrival of the surgeon, who gave no echo to them, though he did all that his skill could suggest. Wilson lingered several days, and then died; and the grief which her strong affection had, for his sake, so effectually kept under, that she nursed and waited on him to the last, now burst forth with natural but fearful violence. In one day, Bessie was a widow, and childless.



CHAPTER VIII.

‘———— The storm begins ; poor wretch,
That for thy mother’s fault art thus exposed
To loss, and what may follow !’

SHAKESPEARE.

It happened at the very time when this double sorrow fell on Mrs. Wilson, that Sir Rupert, who had taken the kindest interest in the fate of his servant, received a packet from Mr. Collins, which called his thoughts to another and much more powerful subject. It contained various documents and accounts relating to the death of Mrs. Danvers ; and, after a very brief report of what had been done, con-

cluded with the information, that the child had been dangerously ill, and that the medical man had strongly advised its removal to the pure air of the country, and receiving the care of a healthy nurse, who could bestow more attention on it, than one who was too poor to devote herself to this duty.

Angry and annoyed, because he felt quite perplexed, Sir Rupert had commenced a reply to Mr. Collins, which, being dictated by these feelings, was not remarkable for its *suaviter in modo*. He reminded him, 'that he had *carte blanche* given him in all that related to this matter—said he had hoped to have been spared any further trouble—and once more begged him to understand——;' but the entrance of the village Esculapius for ever prevented Mr. Collins from understanding on this point—for, after relating the double tragedy that had taken place, he proceeded to say that Mrs. Wilson was herself in a most dangerous and critical state, the loss of her child endangering both her intellects and life. A sud-

den impulse seized Sir Rupert, and he yielded to it.

“Do you mean to say that if she had a child to nurse, the danger would be less?—that there would be more chance of her perfect recovery?”

“I do, Sir Rupert.”

“Then, by to-morrow night, I think I may venture to say that a little girl, about six weeks old, shall supply the place of her own child.”

“Dear me! Excuse me, Sir Rupert—but do I understand you right?” stammered out the astonished doctor.

“Perfectly, sir,” was the stately reply of the baronet, now, for the first time, made aware of the labyrinth into which this dangerous yielding to impulse had involved him, and yet much too proud to retreat at a mere remark. But this was not all. He saw—or fancied he saw—a peculiar expression in the sharp eyes of the medico—a sly play about the corners of a very well-shaped mouth,

which not only brought the colour into Sir Rupert's face, but compelled him to add—

“The child is an orphan, and I have promised to watch over it!”

“Very kind, indeed, of you—very noble—very noble, indeed—and, permit me to say, she will be lucky to have such care bestowed on her as poor Bessie Wilson will give. I have ventured, Sir Rupert, to settle all about the funerals, and hope, in having done so, I have saved you trouble.”

“You have, sir. Let Mrs. Wilson have all she needs; though of this, I know, Lady Rochedale takes care.”

But the mention of Lady Rochedale suggested another train of perplexing thoughts, doubts, and difficulties. Should he frankly tell her the truth?—would it not be better—more dignified—kinder, and safer, for all? But just now there was no time for reflection, moments were important—a letter sent immediately would reach Mr. Collins, so as to ensure the arrival of the child by the next

evening, provided she could bear the journey. Expense was not to be spared ; so, instead of a letter of reprimand, Mr. Collins received one ordering these unexpected measures. And, after a confidential chat with his wife, they agreed that the only way to avoid any blunder, was to see after the performance themselves—she, quoting the old fable of the lark and her young, in support of her proposal, that she would take charge of the little creature, and thus supply the place of any third party.

“You are right,” said her husband ; “Sir Rupert evidently wished to shun publicity in his previous interference—which, after all, merited some thanks ; though this is a strange and contradictory whim, to have the child near him — but it is nothing to us.”

And Mrs. Collins, having seen her god-daughter safely laid in the arms of the sorrowful Mrs. Wilson, returned to town with her husband, having been amply repaid for fatigue

and trouble by hearing Sir Rupert say, when they explained their reason for having acted in this manner—

“Sir, you have laid me under an obligation—you have anticipated my wishes. I thank you and Mrs. Collins for your kindness.”

Mrs. Collins never after this spoke harshly of Sir Rupert.

And thus it came to pass that, a short time afterwards, Margaret Evelyn Danvers was living in one of the pretty lodges belonging to Sir Rupert Rochedale; and the first objects that met her, and among which she grew, were the varied beauties with which Nature had so profusely decked the Chase—that grand old building, with its noble park, its graceful river boundary—which the generosity of her grandfather had caused to descend, to its present possessor, in more than original splendour and worth.

The helpless little being thus introduced to her, amid scenes of such sorrow, and at a time when she herself was ill in body, as well

as sorely distressed in mind, did not immediately awaken favourable feelings in the heart of the childless widow. When Mrs. Wilson looked at the sickly infant that lay by her side, she thought of her own blessed babe, that had never lived to receive her caress; and with this rose another thought, even more hard to bear—that her brave, her kind husband was also taken from her. But Bessie Wilson was one who could never withhold her love or kindness from the helpless and the dependant. The neglected chicken she had nursed—the lamb she had reared when the mother died, were sure to be especial favourites; their need of care made her bestow it abundantly; and their confident trust in its continuance was a mute appeal which she could not resist. And now, as the vehemence of her sorrow abated, and she turned from the memory of the past, to the realities of the present, the strange claimant, thus unexpectedly cast on her protection, had its claims allowed. Day by day did these become

stronger, and her woman's heart, day by day, felt their increasing power. The wan cheek, when its velvet touch was felt on her bosom, was pressed to it more fondly, more closely; the tiny fingers, that feebly closed on one of hers, were kissed again and again; the dove-like coo of healthy infancy, took the place of the fretful wail of suffering, and fell on Bessie's charmed ears like music; while the delicate pink, that replaced the former sallow tinge of little Maggy's complexion, filled her with delight, as a proof of recovered strength.

But the crowning triumph came when the toddling, tottering creature, for the first time, stood self-sustained at her knee, and uttered some of those unintelligible sounds, which beneficent nature has endowed with an eloquence, no oratory can ever hope to equal.

Her precious little Maggy was as the pulse of her heart—an angel sent to comfort her—a blessed thing, with power to re-kindle and re-vivify the love she thought dead and

buried, and to make her, once more, feel the double happiness of loving and being loved.

But were there no suspicions, no heart-burnings, caused by the arrival of this child? In truth, there were—and, when time was given him for reflection, many of these did Sir Rupert anticipate; and, had it been possible to have recalled his letter, he would have done so, for among other unpleasant events likely to arise from this impulsive order, there was one, certain of being an annoyance.

Directly Wilson's death was told to Lady Rochedale, with much kindness, she suggested to her husband, that, as it would be impossible for the widow to remain in her present habitation, a side lodge which had lately been finished would be a comfortable residence for her—while the duty was so nominal, that she could employ herself in needle-work, and thus, with their help, secure a livelihood. Sir Rupert had readily agreed to this; adding a

pension quite sufficient to make her easy as to the future.

And now, by his rash precipitancy, he had brought almost into his home, the child he had hoped never to have seen again. But the folly had been committed—perhaps, she would be claimed by her spendthrift father—he hoped so—and then that would at once free him from his perplexity.

The astonishment of Lady Rochedale, when she knew what had taken place, exceeds description—Sir Rupert actually to send for a child whose existence had never before been mentioned, and announce himself its guardian ! Who were its parents—were they really dead ?

Reserved as Sir Rupert was, she knew him to be a rigid observer of truth in all matters—still, a sharp pang of jealousy shot through her heart, as she looked at the babe now quietly sleeping—and under the influence of this, her besetting weakness, she remarked, with satisfaction, that the dress of the child though tidy, was of the commonest materials,

and destitute of the least vestige of expense or superfluity.

Mrs. Wilson was evidently as ignorant as herself of the real history of this mysterious arrival, and though her ladyship suspected that the doctor could enlighten her, neither by question nor remark did she revert to the matter—nor would she have had her curiosity gratified if even he had known the whole ; for there was a sort of *noli me tangere* look and tone about Sir Rupert, which prevented tattle and gossip from pouncing on his doings, aided not a little by these being generally of a quiet unostentatious character ; and by the Chase being several miles from the town—commonly the head quarters of scandal meetings and busybody committees, where the proceedings of neighbours are freely and *liberally* discussed.

Lady Rochedale, therefore, determined to wait in silence and patience for some communication from her husband himself ; but, perhaps, this was a mistake—her very avoidance of the subject embarrassed him, when he

knew she must be aware of the arrangement, having just returned from Mrs. Wilson's ; and her silence became a barrier to confidence, which he could neither destroy nor surmount. He had been wishing, she would enquire or remark ; he felt that he could then have spoken—perhaps, have told all. But the first glance at her disciplined countenance froze the words of truthful openness that hovered on his lips ; her composed, dispassionate manner sent back the feelings that, after so many years imprisonment, were struggling to be free ; and, readily assenting to some arrangement she proposed regarding Edith, he wrapped himself still more closely in the mantle of reserve.

The golden opportunity was lost,—the angel had descended, and agitated the stagnant waters of the pool—but there was no helping hand, by which either Sir Rupert or Lady Rochedale could avail themselves of its healing virtues.

Another impediment also arose to prevent either party from taking advantage of any

subsequent opportunity for explanation, which might probably have arisen ; for, a few days after Maggy's appearance, news came from Ireland, which summoned Lady Rochedale to the bed-side of her dying and only sister.

Some time before Lady Rochedale's marriage, Kate Stanton, undeterred by his notoriously indifferent character—undismayed by the fate which awaited the wife of a man, who almost boasted of his want of principle—eloped with the handsome *roué* Lord Blaymore, who, to the infinite relief of those interested in her reputation, married her after this rash step—a stretch of generosity, on his part, duly prized by those, whose knowledge of his character, had made them doubtful of this result.

Miserable as they foresaw her life would be, friends—and especially relations—were, by this, spared all reflected disgrace ; and, for her—she had made her choice after having been warned of its consequences. These she must patiently endure—and for many long years

had she endured them — the reality of her sufferings having been far, far worse than those predicted. But she could endure them no longer—and sent for her sister to commend her son to her kindness, to bid her farewell, and then die.

On one point, Lady Rochedale knew she might fully trust her husband. No reasonable indulgence had ever been denied her—no reasonable expense had ever interfered with the gratification of her wishes; and—acting on this knowledge, without even asking his consent — she proposed to Lord Blaymore, that the young Gerald should return with her to England—and remain at the Chase with a private tutor, or be sent to school for a few years, till his father could disentangle his affairs from their present state of bewildering embarrassment.

This result, his lordship pronounced quite impossible ; and, scarcely thanking her for the offer, gave her to understand, that Gerald was not suited for the hum - drum life she

proposed—that he was a little mad-cap, whose mischievous pranks were necessary to his own amusement—and that he must accompany him to Paris, where he intended to remain, while the knowing ones secured him an income from his wide spread estates—and paid his debts with what was left—at the idea of which fanciful unknown sum he laughed heartily; for there were no sales of encumbered estates, then—the Saxon invader had not begun to carry money, intelligence, industry, integrity, to the country that so wofully wanted them all.

‘There is a deep nick in time’s restless wheel
For each man’s good.’

To young Gerald, the chance for good was lost; he accompanied his father to Paris, and before he was fifteen years old, followed him, as chief mourner, to his resting place in *Père la Chaise*. Again, there was a hope for the lad—again, good and evil seemed to contend for him; but, though he came to

England, and was removed from the influence of his father's wretched associates — he had so well learned their lessons, as to have become himself a proficient in many vices ; and, being sent to a public school, he was the ring-leader of more rows, the instigator of more mischief, the skilful and daring arranger of more acts of insubordination, than half-a-score of boys possessing the ordinary share of good-for-nothingness — he was the terror of the neighbourhood — the kill-peace of the under masters—the vexation and grief of the good—the admiration of the bad.

But Gerald has led the grave, apathetic chronicler of events astray ; order has been forgotten while telling of his vagaries. Return we now to the even tenor of our way, and to the inhabitants of, and near, the Chase, which, having been visited once or twice by the young lord, was avoided as carefully—when he could—as if the yellow flag waved from its ancient battlements, and warned him away.

CHAPTER IX.

‘ ————— We were, fair queen,
Two lads, that thought there was no more behind,
But such a day to-morrow as to-day,
And to be boy eternal.’

SHAKESPEARE.

SIX—seven years have passed. Time has done his work—in one hand bringing life, in the other, death ; here causing progress, there decay ; rushing past some in clouds and darkness ; taking gentle flight over others in calm and sunshine.

The last had been generally the case with regard to the Rochedales. Edith had become

an accomplished, intelligent girl; cold in manner and feeling, proud with all her associates, except one, and that one the orphan niece of her governess. When her pupil was about thirteen, Miss Durnsford proposed a rather lengthened visit to London, in order that Edith might avail herself of its many advantages; but, as it was inconvenient to Sir Rupert and Lady Rochedale to establish themselves there for so many months, the latter settled them comfortably in one of the pretty suburbs—and, to make the visit as agreeable as possible to her daughter, she consented that her studies and pleasures should be shared with Minnie Durnsford, to whose maintenance a large portion of her aunt's salary had lately been appropriated; and when Lady Rochedale knew of the young girl's dependant state, with much kindness she proposed that all her holidays should be spent at the Chase.

More than this, her aunt had hitherto declined, sensibly remarking, that the indulgences and luxury, so abundant there, would

unfit her for the career that awaited her. Minnie was as pretty and affectionate a girl as can well be imagined. But on whom was her superabundant stock of love to be bestowed? Not on her aunt—she claimed only her obedience—she accepted only her gratitude. Not on Lady Rochedale—she would often notice her, and make her suitable and valuable presents, but her ladyship shrank from seeming to interfere with the formal arrangements of Miss Durnsford. On Edith, then, she lavished it all; and Edith, to all others so indifferent, accepted the gift, and returned her something of an equivalent. Still, between them, there was a line of demarcation, which Minnie never attempted to pass. Edith liked to patronise; Minnie was willing to be patronised. Edith was kind, and Minnie was grateful.

Nor did closer companionship loosen the bonds that united them; nor did any feeling of rivalry, at this time, embitter their intercourse. Their tastes differed too widely ever

to clash ; they were so unlike, no comparison could ever be made. If Minnie attracted by her singing, Edith remembered Miss Durnsford always praised her intelligence and good sense ; and when Minnie was called pretty, Edith was sure to hear her own ladylike dignity spoken of, and her stately manner commended.

Lady Rochedale's want of consistency was in nothing more remarkable than in her conduct towards her daughter. Had she been asked what she aimed at, she would have answered—to make Edith her companion and friend ; and yet she had for years entrusted her wholly to the care of another ; and, at an age when a mother's influence is so peculiarly valuable, she had sent her from home, and entirely prevented all close intercourse, all habitual familiarity. And now, when Edith returned, greatly improved in what constitutes education, in its common acceptation, her mother was disappointed to find that her reserve was strengthened, and that she was,

perhaps, less companionable, less affectionate than before.

Edith had always been a somewhat scornful spectator of the pursuits of her brother, and that contempt was now increased, by the still greater difference there was between them, in that kind of knowledge which is gained from books—for Basil's delicate health had procured him an exemption from much study, and ensured many indulgences, which the good sense of both parents would otherwise have refused.

To both of them he was very dear—to his mother, for his sweet temper, his transparency of character, for his loving nature, and generous impulses. To his father, though his love was not so evident, he was scarcely less so—there was in Basil a noble truthfulness, shining through a sensitive shyness, with which Sir Rupert felt he could well sympathise;—he was also his heir; and more—much more than this—there was a cause which bound him with triple strength to his father's heart—

though he shivered and quailed when reminded of it. There were symptoms in Basil's delicate health, which spoke in tones of terror to his love—and what, to his mother, seemed only the result of very rapid growth, had been whispered to the father as signs of early decay.

Therefore, Basil had never been sent from home, but had a private tutor—an arrangement which seemed very pleasant to them both; for the pupil contrived to render the tutor's duties very easy—something like those snug Government sinecures, where Tom has a good salary for doing nothing, and Dick is liberally paid for helping him.

At length, kind fortune threw in Basil's way an acquaintance, who, by the magic touch of youthful enthusiasm, and youthful trust, was speedily converted into a friend. Percy Rochedale was rather older than Basil, and, happily, was quite worthy of the friendship which he so prodigally offered. He had lately become an orphan, and inherited nothing but what was derived from his mother's settle-

ment; for his father, though he had filled a diplomatic post, with much credit and honour, lost it during an unexpected change of ministry, and took the loss so much to heart, that he never overcame it.

Though only very distantly connected, Sir Rupert generously came forward, and soothed his last moments, by promising to watch over Percy, and educate him for the army, for which profession the boy evinced a passionate predilection; and it was to qualify him for passing a creditable examination, that Sir Rupert placed him with the Rev. Mr. Cleveland—once a soldier himself, and whose mathematical and engineering knowledge eminently fitted him for the office. If Percy should be successful, of which there was little doubt, he was then to be launched on the waters of real life, and steer and trim through its dangers as best he could; and, from all he had seen, Sir Rupert ventured to hope he would do this safely and honourably.

A companion—a friend! magical words!

how rarely are ye thoroughly understood and valued ! How happy Basil was with his newly-found wealth ! He could not sufficiently enjoy it—therefore he never rested till he obtained permission to share such of Percy's studies as would be useful to himself ; and, as Sir Rupert watched the beneficial change which this plan produced, he was glad he had yielded. Basil was all but at home, the distance was so trifling ; he had all its advantages which his health required, and was away from many things which were, perhaps, injurious ; and when his father saw the two boys together, he almost envied his son a possession he had never known—his college life having been rendered, by the interference of his mother, and her discouragement to his forming acquaintances, almost as solitary as that which he led at home. The more he saw of Percy, the more did he admire and respect him ; and felt proud to think, that the name of Rochedale was borne by one who promised to do it honour. Lady Rochedale

also became much attached to her son's companion, and often fancied that her husband never appeared to greater advantage, than when unbending in the society of the friends—never did he seem so amiable, as when kindly devising some scheme for their amusement; and she sighed, as she recalled the painful contrast caused by his habitual pride and coldness.

But the year of happiness was near its close; Percy was hoping to pass a good examination; and Basil was lamenting that now, when every moment of his society was so precious, his time was almost wholly devoted to study.

Thus hoping, thus complaining, they were one day rambling in the wood, when the loud and agonized screams of a child were distinctly heard. The boys had gradually been approaching the side lodge, and as the continued cries proceeded from that direction, they hastened straight on, till they burst through a thick plantation into the carriage-

way, nearly opposite to Mrs. Wilson's pretty garden.

A man was standing near the gate, whom Basil recognised as one of the house servants ; and in a basket, which hung from his arm, lay a little dog, of the black and tan kind, generally so much admired. Clinging to the basket with a force and tenacity, such as, in one of her slight frame, seemed impossible, was little Maggy ; and from her the cries, and screams, and scarcely articulate entreaties proceeded, and increased, as she became aware of her useless attempts to rob the basket of its contents, in spite of her continued hold ; while Mrs. Wilson was vainly trying to pacify her, her own countenance showing signs of sorrow and compassion.

But it was the child that fixed the attention of the boys, and, for a few minutes, rendered them passive spectators. Only partly dressed, as the little frock held by Mrs. Wilson evinced, her pretty arms were bare to the shoulders, on which her soft, curly, dark hair fell in reck-

less disorder ; while her large eyes were filled with an expression of the most intense feeling. Earnest entreaty was in her childish tones, and she touchingly sobbed out :—“ Oh ! give him to me ! give him to me ! I will nurse him—I will cure him !” And then her face was clouded with sorrow, as, bewailing his fate, she exclaimed :—“ My pretty darling—my dear little pet, must you be drowned ?” But, as if the enquiry conjured up an idea too dreadful to be tamely endured, she suddenly let go her grasp, and while her chest heaved with feelings too powerful for her childish frame, she clenched her hands with frantic vehemence, and the small features became inflamed with a passion that sparkled in her eyes, as she again screamed :—“ Give him me. I will have him ;” and as the man, freed now from the grasp, he had not liked roughly to shake off, moved away, she staggered from exhaustion and seemed falling.

“ Richard, what is this ?” asked Basil, while Percy ran forward to catch the

little fainting form before it fell on the ground.

“Why, sir, I hardly know,” replied the man; “but this little dog is Miss Rochedale’s—and somehow it broke its leg, and whined, and vexed her; so she has sent it to be drowned; and, as I was passing the lodge, I saw Maggy at the window, and, foolish like, told her.”

“You see, sir,” explained Mrs. Wilson, holding Maggy in her arms, who was now perfectly quiet, though no longer unconscious, “the pup was given to me, and Maggy took to it, so that it was quite her companion; when Miss Rochedale, a week or two ago, admired it so much, that I offered it to her, not knowing that Maggy loved it. However, she was pacified when I told her the creature was better off at the house than with us, and she had begun to be reconciled, when, unfortunately, Richard came and told us—” —a trembling of her burthen, and low sobs here interrupted her—“Hush, hush, my bird!” she

whispered ; but the grief could not be hushed by a few words.

“ Well, but let us see how this may be managed,” said Percy, much touched by the child’s distress, and equally disgusted at the cruelty of the imperious Edith, who had often annoyed him by her impertinent condescension to himself, and her indifference towards Basil ; “ dogs need not be drowned because they break their legs ; and if this little girl likes to take care of the animal, and her mother lets her, why not ?” and, without more ado, he took the basket.

“ But Miss Rochedale, sir !” said Richard, by no means satisfied with this cavalier proceeding.

“ Pshaw !” muttered the ungallant youth, carefully balancing the trophy.

“ I will undertake that no blame shall fall on you, Richard,” said Basil ; “ I am sure Miss Rochedale will not object ; she has no wish to do what is cruel.”

“ Nor what is kind either,” muttered Percy

to himself; and, having reached the house, with much promptitude and skill, he prepared all that was needful, and then gently examined the fracture—the little dog, with that instinct which is so wonderful, and so touchingly beautiful, offering no resistance, as if he knew that kindness was in that look, and healing in the hand that so tenderly moved him. Percy splinted the fracture in the most scientific manner, and, quite absorbed in the performance of his humane action, saw nothing but the leg and his apparatus.

But Basil was watching Maggy, who, kneeling down, had one hand on the silky ears of the dog, as if to be sure, by her touch, that he was not spirited away, for her eyes were fixed on Percy, whose handsome, animated face, wore an expression of unusual gravity. Once only did she move her hand or change her posture, and that was when the dark brown locks, that clustered over his high forehead, seemed to shade his sight. He tossed them back with an impatient gesture, but again

they fell over his eyes. She, perceiving this, rose, and gently, but effectually, put them behind his ears. Percy nodded his thanks, and she resumed her former posture.

Basil was thinking that her eyes were something wonderful. What were they saying?—for surely they spoke; and he was puzzling over their meaning, when Percy, with a ‘there,’ and a kind caress bestowed on the dog, which gratefully returned it, announced that the operation was finished; and, giving directions with the gravity of a hospital surgeon, promised to call again and see after his patient—and, having washed his hands, both boys left the lodge.

“What extraordinary eyes!” said Basil.

“Are they? I saw nothing but the leg,” replied Percy; “but I dare say it is a pretty creature. And, I say, Basil, as I am going to be a soldier, I think it a very good thing that a fellow who breaks or loses his understanding, is not condemned to be drowned.”

Basil forgot to defend Edith from this in-

direct attack ; he had not yet recovered from his astonishment at the eyes.

“ I mean Maggy’s eyes,” he said, gravely.

“ Oh ! do you,”—and Percy laughed merrily at the cross purpose of his answer. “ Truly, they are queer things—she seemed all eyes, except what was nose, when we first came up. What a vixen she will be !”

But he called the next day to see after Pet and the leg, and found the embryo vixen still so exhausted by her passionate grief, that she had fallen asleep on a little bed made-up near the dog’s basket—for she could not bear to lose sight of him ; and before Percy left the neighbourhood, he had the pleasure of seeing Pet run out at the sound of his step, and testify, by every means in his power, his gratitude ; while that of his happy little mistress was evinced, by the quiet but deep delight, that shone in every feature whenever Percy appeared.

CHAPTER X.

‘What wert thou, then ? A child most infantine,
Yet wandering far beyond that innocent age,
In all but its sweet looks and mien divine.’

SHELLEY.

FOR a long time after the departure of his friend, Basil Rochedale felt as if he never could be comforted ; and, as the side lodge was associated in his mind with one of Percy’s recent deeds, thither he frequently directed his steps, to ask after Pet, talk to Mrs. Wilson about the cure and curer, and gaze at those eyes, in which lay thoughts and feelings he vainly attempted to comprehend—and, as he

found in the widow and Maggy much that interested and surprised him, he often brought books from his own childish store, that were most valuable and useful, in advancing the education which, without knowing it, Mrs. Wilson had so well begun.

Had Alice Danvers had the power of choosing the person who was to supply her place to her child, she could scarcely have selected one better calculated to train her to virtue and happiness, than Bessie Wilson. At a very early age a broken wrist had rendered one arm useless for a long time, and a remaining weakness seemed an irreparable misfortune, as her parents were poor, and she was destined for service — this was now impossible; so an effort was made to keep her at an infant school, till she should be able to conduct one herself.

This plan was successful; and when Wilson, an intelligent man, chose her for his wife, he found his home none the less comfortable, because she could read and write—his clothes

none the less carefully kept, because she was a beautiful needlewoman, nor his fire-side the less cheerful and attractive, because she could sing with sense and feeling the childish songs suited to her former occupation, and tell, in proper language, of many curious and instructive things she had learned from books.

How valuable did her little store of learning now seem, as she gradually imparted it to Maggy—how pleasant it was, when all within was neat and in order, to sit in the porch, which twining plants filled with perfume, and teach the little fingers all the ingenious uses of the needle—how richly was her trouble repaid, when the sweet voice of the child joined hers in singing snatches of songs, and, perhaps, the whole of the Evening Hymn! or, when, as a reward for the performance of some less enticing task, Mrs. Wilson, ‘mammy,’ as she was called, would tell one of those tales of a good little girl, of which she possessed an ample store, or read some parts of that wonderful allegory, ‘Pilgrim’s Progress,’ the magic

influence of which is acknowledged by old and young, wherever there is poetry or imagination.

But the child's mind was far from being overtaken — for though healthy, she was delicate—of slow growth—and still showed that she had not overcome the severe trials to which her infant frame had been exposed —therefore she was encouraged in all amusements that required exercise; and many a game of hide and seek did she and Pet have, while Mrs. Wilson glanced up smilingly from her work or book.

One defect, arising from her peculiar position, this good friend lamented, without being able to correct — this was Maggy's total isolation, not only from those of her own age, but from almost every one. When Mrs. Wilson moved to the side lodge, though Sir Rupert settled on her a very comfortable annuity, and announced his intention of allowing her a sum for her nursling, which seemed to Bessie enormous, still she was very lonely.

In vain did she, day after day, hope that

some hint would be given respecting the parentage, and previous station of the infant so strangely thrust upon her—and when she summoned courage to ask—“Is she christened, sir?” the short reply—“Yes, Margaret Evelyn,” and Sir Rupert’s instant reference to something else—proved that no further information was to be expected. Like Lady Rochedale, the same suspicion, for a brief interval, flitted about the brain of Mrs. Wilson ; but the systematic avoidance of all reference to Maggy, the apparent forgetfulness of her very existence, by degrees, obliterated this fancy—for, she reasonably argued, if she were his child, he surely would not have her so near, without wishing to see or hear of her—if he feared discovery, he would not thus publicly introduce her, and almost court remark, and encourage suspicion—and at last she believed what had been told her ; that she was the orphan of persons he had known, probably whom he had befriended.

As to Lady Rochedale, she would just

notice the child when she sometimes called at the lodge, but it was very coldly done; and generally, when she had work for the widow, she sent for her; on which occasions some feeling whispered that she had better leave Maggy with a trusty village girl, who did the rougher work of the small household, so that never once had the child seen the interior of the house in which her grandfather had been born.

About this time a rare event happened, namely, the arrival of some old friends, on an unexpected visit. Almost the only relatives with whom the late Lady Rochedale had kept up a cordial acquaintance, were two of the Malcolm family, a brother and sister, both of whom, in Rupert's very youthful days, were frequent guests at the Chase; though various circumstances had caused these visits to cease long before Alice resided there. It was at their house Sir Rupert had met Elizabeth Stanton; and almost immediately after their marriage, Mr. Malcolm accepted an

appointment in one of the colonies, where he and his sister had remained till very lately, when, with his newly married wife, they returned to Europe. Both Sir Rupert and Lady Rochedale then earnestly pressed for a visit, and, shortly after Percy left, these friends of 'Auld lang syne,' who had been so long separated, were again to look each other in the face.

Of course, this put a stop to Basil's frequent calls at the lodge, where he was greatly missed by Maggy and Pet; the latter he always fed and played with, and to the former he would tell some story, while she, or her mammy, mended his fishing net, or performed any other little service, which he vainly asked Edith to do; and then he would be off to spend his two or three hours with Mr. Cleveland. But now, in honour of their guests, Sir Rupert and Lady Rochedale projected every day some fresh scheme of amusement, till the visit, originally meant to be 'a rest day, a drest day, and a prest day,' was

prolonged to ten days ; and then Mr. Malcolm declared they must decamp during the night, or they never should perform their engagements to other friends. "Not yet—not yet," was raised in chorus ; for it seemed as if the genial influence of the guests made a favourable impression on the whole family.

There was a harmony among the Malcolms which silenced the discord of less well-tuned natures—an openness that unlocked the reserve of others, and a ready giving and taking of sympathy and kindness, that put to shame the false pride which pretended to be independent of these blessings ; and rebuked the folly, which, claiming to be above human weakness, shows itself destitute of human greatness.

It happened, one day, that Sir Rupert, while correcting Mr. Malcolm as to some historical incident, connected with the chequered fortunes of the Rochedale family, mentioned 'Basil's monument,' a large fragment of rock, which marked the spot at which the memora-

ble chase ended, and which tradition said was rolled there by the united force of a hundred men, Miss Malcolm immediately expressed a wish to see it; and Basil, claiming his privilege of being showman to his namesake's memorial, begged permission to escort her.

After a charming drive through the less frequented parts of the Chase, they reached the legendary spot, and Basil's eyes sparkled with pleasure as he listened to the expressions of delight which broke from his companion, when he stopped to point out some of his favourite views. Here, it was a gentle eminence, whence the grey towers of the old cathedral could be seen, contrasting, as they did, on this day, with the deep blue of the sky. From another place, the hills of the adjacent county formed their horizon, obscured, here and there, by that dreamy mist of distance in which the painter delights. Now, through the well-contrived openings, they see the river—that boundary so celebrated in the history of the property—gliding slowly along, reflecting from

its smooth surface, in golden ripples, the meridian sun ; while, lower down, it chafed over masses of rock, sending on every side thousands of silver spangles, which met and parted, and met again to flow peacefully on.

In his eagerness to show her all the hidden beauty of the place, Basil persuaded Miss Malcolm to climb to the top of a mass of large stones, whence the view richly repaid the scramble ; but as they descended, in his over-anxiety to assist her, he trod on her muslin flounce, and made a most formidable rent. Isabel good-naturedly assured him it was a reparable injury, but Basil was really annoyed at his awkwardness, especially as he found it prevented her walking with him to see the ruins of the old bridge.

“How sorry I am !” he repeated ; but suddenly he brightened up, and said—“I will have it mended, and show you something worth seeing into the bargain.”

So he gently touched the pony, and they skimmed off to the side lodge, where, as

he hoped, they found Mrs. Wilson and Maggy.

“I have brought you a fracture to repair, almost as bad as Pet’s leg,” he said. “Run, Maggy, and thread your mammy’s needle. Now, Miss Malcolm, do not let my disaster flutter in my face any longer; while I go and look at the bees, Mrs. Wilson will put you all to rights.”


Amused at his off-hand dictation, Miss Malcolm readily submitted, for the widow’s cap surrounding a young face, always roused her interest, which was not lessened by the pleasing expression that face wore; and, while the efficient services of Mrs. Wilson were being rendered, she was struck with the appearance of Maggy, whose busy fingers were anticipating every need, and whose loving eyes, fixed on Mrs. Wilson, seemed reading her wishes.

“Your little girl is very handy,” remarked Miss Malcolm, when, the reparation having been performed quickly, she seated herself to wait for Basil; and she passed her hand

caressingly over the fine, soft hair of the child, and, raising the little face, pressed on it a kiss.

What a thrill of pleasure passed through the child's heart ; how the slight frame trembled with delight ; how the pale face, generally thought plain, lighted up with a bright blush, and became almost beautiful, as it was bathed in a glow of affection. Unconsciously, the lady drew the little creature closer to her, as she talked with Mrs. Wilson, and, astonished to find in her so much intelligence, she never noticed that Maggy, after looking at her, as if learning every feature by heart, kissed and fondled the wide folds of her dress, as a worshipper would those of his idol—so powerful, so instantaneous is the blessed influence of kindness on the loving heart.

But Basil now returned ; and, after repeating her thanks, again she bent down towards the child ; but this time the little arms were clasped round her neck, and the innocent mouth met hers in a loving kiss, that each long remembered.



"Oh, Maggy, Maggy!" exclaimed Mrs. Wilson, in reproachful tones, as if ashamed.

"Let her do so," said Miss Malcolm; "I like it. And now, little one, good-bye;" and they drove off.

The next was the last day the Malcolms spent at the Chase, and so many other subjects had to be talked of and settled, that Isabel found no opportunity of mentioning the interest she felt for the widow and child.


"How little you are changed, Isabel!" Lady Rochedale had once remarked to her friend. "I can hardly believe so many years have elapsed since we met."

Isabel smiled; but she could not say the same to her hostess, who looked much older than she really was, and Miss Malcolm's quick observation soon told her this was not surprising. In spite of Edith's improved manner, which had been put on for the occasion, she saw that she was not amiable. In spite of the wealth and luxury which surrounded them, Isabel feared that Sir Rupert and his wife had

not that love and confidence which are above all price. In spite of Basil's gay, unclouded temper, his winning ways, his guileless nature, she dreaded to think that without the blessing of health, to give promise of security and permanence, these amiable qualities would only serve to deepen and strengthen the grief that she feared was hovering over his parents.

And now the last morning was come.

“However,” said Lady Rochedale, “we shall have you to look at till luncheon time,” for the whole party were to drive to the cathedral town, which contained several relics interesting to a would-be antiquary, as Mr. Malcolm modestly called himself, and, when there, they were to lunch with the dean. This was rather a long drive, and the coachman, in order to economise distance, took the shorter way, which was by the side lodge. The ladies occupied the carriage; the gentlemen and Basil were on horseback, and Sir Rupert was so engaged in an explanation he was giving Mr. Malcolm, that he never



noticed the way they took till the lodge was full in view, and the widow stood respectfully holding the gate open for the party to pass.

Now, though it would often have saved him a long round, Mrs. Wilson never remembered having seen Sir Rupert go out by this gate ; and it certainly did seem strange, that more than seven years should have elapsed without his ever having seen the child he so bountifully paid for.

“How do you do, Mrs. Wilson ?” said Lady Rochedale, as the widow bent to her and the other ladies ; “I think Mrs. Scott will be glad to see you about some work.”

“I thank your ladyship—I will step up this evening, if convenient to her.”

“Do so. Good morning !” And, without look or word, or notice of any kind to the little figure that stood by her side, Lady Rochedale threw herself back in the carriage. Not so, Isabel and her sister-in-law—the former was looking at them with deep interest, and a sweet smile of recognition was bestowed on

both ; while Mrs. Malcolm, having attentively regarded the child, seemed rather perplexed. Maggy, at all times, was calculated to attract attention—not because of her beauty—for she was plain, with a bad complexion ; but there was an air of refinement wholly at variance with her rustic and simple attire, and a shade of thought on her open brow equally inconsistent with her very infantine figure.

She stood by Mrs. Wilson, having run out at the unusual sound of a carriage ; and, with that power of imitation so strong in some children, she now not only mimicked her, by laying her tiny hand on the heavy gate, and by dropping a succession of curtseys, but the pleased and grateful feeling which was ever ready to spring from Mrs. Wilson's heart, and shine forth in her looks, when she saw those who had loaded her with kindness, was reflected with extraordinary fidelity in the flexible features of the child. Her large white sun-bonnet, which she had hastily thrown on, fell back, as she raised her head to look

inside the carriage, and formed a sort of hood, leaving at liberty the thick dark curls with which it strongly contrasted. Lowly and respectfully did the widow bend to Sir Rupert, and grateful was the look she gave. Lowly and respectfully did Maggy do the same—the same was her look.

But was it really the same?—not so did his conscience interpret it; to him it came mixed with reproach—it brought back the memory of days, when a look from eyes very similar, had made his heart beat with joy—it carried him once more to the solemn evening, when he had seen those eyes just before they closed for ever; no—no—there was no gratitude in that glance—why should there be?—what had he done to deserve it?

These thoughts rushed like a whirlwind through his brain, for he was roused from them by the cheerful voice of Basil, saying—“ Ah, Maggy! and how is Pet?—oh, there he is—hi, Pet! seize him!” as the animal hearing him, rushed out, having pre-

viously made a precipitate retreat, on seeing that Miss Rochedale occupied part of the carriage.

“Who is that nice-looking woman?” asked Mrs. Malcolm—“and the child, is it hers?—what remarkable eyes it has—I cannot think where I have seen such before, Douglas,” addressing her husband—“I wish you could tell me where I have seen her eyes.”

Mr. Malcolm laughingly replied, that there could be but one place, namely—where they now were; when Sir Rupert—who thought it just possible, that Mrs. Malcolm might have met his ill-starred cousin at fashionable parties, during the heyday of her married life—broke the chain of her recollection by enlisting her sympathy for Mrs. Wilson, whose story he related; and then with desperate resolution, resolved not to lose *this* opportunity, he added—

“The child is not hers—but an orphan—her spendthrift father left her destitute, and we have taken charge of her.”

Lady Rochedale breathed more freely; there was truth in her husband’s tone; and

the way in which he had associated her in this kind deed was so soothing to feelings always rather morbid, and, on this subject, doubly sensitive, that, though the drive to the cathedral town was by no means amusing, and a visit to the pompous dean a very dull affair, her spirits seemed quite exhilarated ; and Isabel was pleased to see one she really loved, look so happy.

“ I wish I could induce you to take a part in public matters,” said Mr. Malcolm to Sir Rupert—“ there is some talk of one of your members retiring. Were you to enter the lists, your success would be certain.”

“ Perhaps so, as regards my being returned ; not so sure the success of my services. Long as it is since our family meddled with legislative matters, I have not forgotten that, when we did, we always burnt our fingers and lessened our means, without having, in the least, benefitted the nation. No, no ; I govern my tenantry well, but I have no one quality that is essential to form a legislator.”

"I differ from you in that estimate," said Mr. Malcolm, who had a high opinion of his relation's ability ; "but if you will not come for business, you must all come for pleasure, and visit us next spring—this alone will induce us to take you, as we return from Scotland in the autumn."

Edith, who had been very silent during the drive, and, seemingly, uninterested, now listened with anxious ears and a beating heart to an arrangement which followed for visiting London, and could scarcely repress an exclamation of pleasure when she heard her father and mother, as they returned, discuss various matters, so as to render their journey as pleasant as possible.

And all was happily arranged, and the Malcolms returned ; and, in expectation of their lengthened stay, the Chase put on its gala dress—guests were invited—parties were given—and, as Mrs. Scott said, the place grew quite young again under the influence of this unwonted gaiety. Basil was wild with excite-

ment and joy, for Percy was for a short time of the party ; and even Lady Rochedale looked smiling and cheerful. Sir Rupert, also, so far felt the beneficial influence of social intercourse, that the promise to visit London in the spring, which he had half repented having given, lost most of its fancied terrors, and he looked forward to it not only as a duty to his family, but as an event which might weaken many painful recollections, and banish or disjoin various sad associations.

And Edith—how liked she this projected change? To her it was all like a blissful dream—for a change had passed over her, and this proud apathetic girl, on whom cloud or sunshine had formerly produced little apparent effect, frequently wept herself to sleep from an excess of happiness—and found in tears, the best relief to feelings of delight that were sometimes so strong as to appear through her cold reserve—and then Lady Rochedale would wonder what had made Edith so amiable, and sigh, and wish

that such moods were more frequent and lasting.

But, whence arose this improvement? What had made Edith so much more agreeable?—for though she had enjoyed the former visit of the Malcolms, it was only as an agreeable interruption to the usual monotony of her life—what had happened during their absence to cause this exuberance of feeling?

Was it caused by the unexpected appearance of her cousin Gerald?—In truth it was — and though Edith was quite unconscious of his power over her, and the effect his presence produced—without tracing the cause to him, she was aware of a new feeling of pleasure in everything; of the happiness of the present, and the joy of the future, which the certainty of frequently meeting him during their London visit, brought before her.

Had she asked herself why she felt so happy, the knowledge she might have acquired would have diminished that happiness—had she had any definite idea to what her hopes pointed,

she might have become aware that it was a delusion—and that what appeared to her so bright and beautiful had no reality. But Edith was too young to stop and make such an analysis — it was enough that Gerald's manner was as kind as ever—that he claimed her services as of old—that he laughed and chatted with her even more freely than before.

She had a long and painful lesson to learn, before she could know that this careless familiarity vanishes at the presence of anxious, doubting love—and that, if Lord Blaymore had had the least spark of aught beyond a kind regard for his cousin, a change of manner would have been the immediate consequence.

Ah ! how Edith wished spring would come, for then she should again meet him !

CHAPTER XI.

‘—— He who contends for freedom,
Can ne’er be justly deem’d his sovereign’s foe;
No! ’tis the wretch who tempts him to subvert it,
The soothing slave, the traitor in the bosom,
Who but deserves that name; he is a worm
That eats out all the happiness of a kingdom.’

THOMSON.

AND spring has come—a delicate green daily becomes more perceptible on hedges and sheltered plantations; the violet and primrose betray their whereabouts by their sweet perfume; the birds are darting through the air, laden with materials for their curious architecture; the sun shines brightly on the hardy,

glossy leaves of the evergreens; and the atmosphere assumes that peculiar transparency, which genial winds always produce. Everything has the promise of approaching beauty, fragrance, and grace, which is sure to be fulfilled when Nature makes it.

London is thronged; for the season has begun there also—the season of balls and operas—of levees and drawing-rooms—of dusty drives and over-heated saloons—of fêtes, fashion, frivolity, and flirtations—of engagements and entanglements—hollow gaiety and heavy hearts—artificial smiles and artificial flowers—rivalry and manœuvring;—where gambling and speculation are carried on as fast and furious as at the Stock Exchange—only the game is for a splendid marriage and large settlements—the speculation is for an heiress, or a fortune; and, instead of Jew brokers and Christian jobbers, the actors are lords and ladies—the theatre is the haunt of nobility, and the head quarter of fashion.

Leaving the Rochedale party among scenes

and persons, so unlike the quiet and beauty of the Chase, thither do we return, and find Mrs. Scott in all the bustle and responsibility of preparing for a thorough reparation of the house, during the absence of the family, which is to last much longer than had been originally proposed.

On this occasion, the offered aid of Mrs. Wilson was gratefully accepted; and, for the first time, Maggy accompanied her, and, by her handy and careful activity, soon became a favourite with the stately old house-keeper. Trotting, after Mrs. Scott, through the magnificent rooms, she looked on objects of luxury and taste, and beheld tokens of wealth, which, for a few days, bewildered her; for it is mortifying to be obliged to confess that, unlike some wonderful heroines, she manifested no intuitive knowledge of things never before seen, and evinced no particular pleasure in being among velvets, and satins, and very grand upholstery; on the contrary, she was, at first, very much afraid of touching

the rare and costly furniture, lest she should injure it ; and, far from feeling quite at home in the splendid drawing-room, she was glad to find herself once more in Mrs. Scott's neat little parlour.

Pleased, as she evidently was, with all she saw, it was not till she entered the two rooms more especially appropriated to Basil, that she evinced anything like interest or officious interference ; but when *his* books were removed, how carefully she dusted them—how respectfully she handled his fishing-tackle—how neatly she arranged his colour-box and sketching materials—and with what anxious care she packed away a tool-chest, which Mrs. Scott said belonged to Mr. Percy, whose bed-room adjoined that of his friend.

“ Oh ! you may have them, child,” was Mrs. Scott's generous remark, when Maggy, more adventurous than herself, had dived to the bottom of a locker, and brought up a lapful of papers, covered with various crayon and water-colour drawings.

“What, all!” she exclaimed, scarcely believing she heard aright, and that what, in her estimation, was of such value, could become hers.

“Yes, yes; they are of no consequence: but, bless me! how flushed and warm you look—we shall have you laid up if you go fagging about in this manner. So leave off routing and foraging—sit down quietly, finish covering Master Basil’s best bound volumes, and there, keep these little story books, for he will never want them, and wait for mammy and me in my room.”

Eager as Maggy was to ascertain the amount of the fortune she had just inherited, every book was nicely covered, and placed ready for Mrs. Scott to pack away, before she descended; and then, laying her possessions on the rug, she sat down to examine them. Among the drawings were some rough, but clever views, taken from various parts of the Chase—one very effective coloured sketch of the side lodge, a crayon likeness of a dog, which she at once recognized

as Pet; and, to complete its value in her eyes, the letters 'P. R.' seemed to mark this as the performance of Pet's friend, Percy Rochedale. Oh! the delight of smoothing every scrap of that heterogeneous mass—oh! the affectionate admiration with which they were gazed at—and the eager solicitude with which she claimed equal applause from Mrs. Scott and her mammy.

"I declare your little Maggy grows quite pretty," remarked the good-natured house-keeper—whose favour had been won by the gentle manner and ready obedience of the child—she having just darted up stairs to fetch Mrs. Scott's work-basket.

"I dare say it is very silly of me," replied Mrs. Wilson; "but I always thought so—at least, I very soon did. A real comfort is that little face to me."

It was about this time that a visitor arrived at the Parsonage—one much respected by both Mr. and Mrs. Cleveland; but whose duties prevented his frequent acceptance of the

hospitality they were always delighted to offer.

Many years ago—indeed, it was nearly forty—some young students in one of the German universities—probably after having indulged in longer draughts of stronger beer than was usual—took it into their heads to sally forth, disturb the slumbers of the peaceful inhabitants, commit various foolish and destructive excesses, and wound up their absurdity by uttering seditious cries, and bespattering the house of a government official with mud! Now, in England, such an outbreak would have been considered and treated as a silly school-boy offence, and punished accordingly; but nations are sometimes placed in such delicate and equivocal circumstances, and become, in consequence, so thin-skinned, and sensitive, that a look becomes an offence, and a joke is treated as a serious insult, calling for public and signal punishment.

Such was the case now—the boys, instead of being sobered by a bread and water diet,

and brought to their senses by the confiscation of their pipes and tobacco—were arrested and imprisoned, as disaffected and dangerous democrats; and, though the absurdity was not carried to the length of putting them on trial, the course pursued, injured the prospects of most, and ruined several.

Among the delinquents, was the younger son of the Baron Von Rüdiger—and the baron was a courtier, point device. From the fashion of his peruke, to the tie of his shoe—from his smile, to his bow—from his servility to the favourite—to his forgetfulness of an old friend in disgrace, all told of the court. And to think that one of his sons!—his son Albrecht, named after one of the royal family—the son, who on the strength of his name, and his sire's perfect courtiership, was to have inherited his whole court suit, with emoluments sufficient to keep it in excellent repair—to think!—but no, he would not think. So when a penitential letter came from the silly lad, instead of the wise forbearance which would have made him see

his folly, and prevented its recurrence, a harsh sentence of prolonged banishment from home, was the reply, and his removal to a strict military school, the consequence.

The life so tyrannically marked out for him, was one peculiarly distasteful to young Albrecht. Delicate health, during his childhood, had placed him more than his elder brother, under the influence of his mother—an accomplished, but rather weak-minded woman—whose studies alternated between the sentimental romance, and crude philosophy of very young Germany. Happily, a taste and talent for music, prevented her son from wasting the whole of his time on these useless, and, often dangerous productions; still, as it was, the effect of this early course of reading, followed him through life.

Wearied both in mind and body by the fatiguing and monotonous existence of a German military institution, Albrecht sealed his fate by escaping from his hateful duties, and seeking shelter and protection from a

distant relation, who held some appointment in Paris. These were granted him, and, by the time he was twenty-two, the small emoluments of a subordinate situation in a public office, aided by his success in several literary attempts, supplied his moderate wants, and left him leisure to cultivate a taste for music, with him, almost a passion.

But once more his evil genius found him ; and having imprudently uttered, in public, sentiments which, to a jealous government, sounded like censure, his lodgings were searched, his papers seized, and, translations from hot-headed Teutonic patriots being found in his handwriting, the opinions were viewed as his, and he was committed to prison.

Enthusiastic and confiding, simple-minded and illogical, Albert Von Rüdiger had never closely and impartially examined many of those sentiments and doctrines, which, not contented with translating and quoting, he had marked with expressions of the most unqualified admiration. In these writings he found

the words freedom, liberal constitution, sovereign people, used with a prodigality that at first dazzled, and ended by bewildering him. He did not stop to remember that there must be a fitness for constitutional government before it can be safely introduced, or it is like giving a firebrand to an idiot. In *his* earnest honesty of purpose, he believed his liberty ceased when it infringed on that of another, and never, by any sophistry, fancied that his freedom gave him a right to enslave his fellows.

Those, however, with whom he had imprudently associated himself, had very different and much less elevated ideas. With them, in practice, though not in words, liberty and license were synonymous when *they* were concerned, and freedom was the power to do just as *they* liked.

After some suffering and much trouble; through the influence of friends, and the testimony of his own blameless life, Albrecht was released; but France was no longer the

country of his adoption — and with some dearly bought experience, but very little more wisdom ; a few introductions, and scarcely any money ; he sought an asylum on the friendly shores of England—that refuge for the destitute—that workhouse of the universe—where the hunted exile may repose, and where the starving patriot may find food and shelter.

Here, by teaching music, and German, he obtained a subsistence ; and when his health began to fail, through the kindness of Mr. Cleveland, he was introduced to the dignitaries of the cathedral ; and on the death of the organist, obtained the situation. This led to his teaching in many of the most wealthy neighbouring families ; and the son of the haughty Baron Von Rüdiger—the son of the man who would have communicated with one in a similar station, at the imperial court, through the medium of some middleman, performed his duties cheerfully and well — and received his stipend year after year, till he

almost forgot his armorial bearings and long descent; and when the provincial engraver, omitted the cherished 'Von' on the new card plate, when the old was worn out, and changed Herr, into Mr., the organist and music master faintly smiled, and muttering—"it does not matter," put them into his case for distribution.

This, then, was the Parsonage guest, whose gentle manners—whose strict probity—whose stores of rare and peculiar learning, rendered him always welcome. But he had now come for a long time — perhaps for five or six weeks; and as he had expressed a wish to see the interior of the Chase, the choice treasures of which were now rapidly disappearing in huge cases, or under brown holland—a few days after Maggy had become acquainted with the turnings and windings of the stately house, he was introduced there by his host and hostess.

CHAPTER XII.

‘————— Suddenly

She would arise, and like the secret bird
Whom sunset wakens, fill the shore and sky
With her sweet accents—a wild melody.’

SHELLEY.

“AH! I see we have chosen an inconvenient time for our survey,” said Mrs. Cleveland, whose housekeeping experience made her, at once, perceive the state of matters, and the claim Mrs. Scott had on her time; “but I fear, if we offer to come some other day, many of the rooms will be inaccessible, and most of the pictures put away. If you will permit

me, I think I can safely pioneer our friend through your packages, and show him the objects and views of the greatest interest."

"Really," replied Mrs. Scott, hastily removing the snowy apron which covered her black silk one, and trying to hide her linen gauntlet sleeves,—“I am quite ashamed to be caught this figure; but you see, madam, I like to superintend all these doings. Sir Rupert and my lady do not require it, but their very kindness ——”

“No apology is needed, my good old friend,” interrupted Mr. Cleveland, smiling; “we all understand the reason—you think nothing can be done well without you, and so pay the penalty by going through all sorts of needless fatigue.”

“Perhaps your reverence is right,” she answered, the pleased expression of her face showing that she felt the compliment. “The habits of nearly sixty years are not soon given up. But here is little Maggy Wilson, who will help you to find many things which have

been removed, and which the gentleman will like to see. Where is the wee thing, with her sharp eyes? Maggy, Maggy!—come here, child, and show Mrs. Cleveland where the old cabinets are put; here are the keys. And uncover some of the furniture in the state drawing-room, and open the shutters in Miss Rochedale's boudoir, and in the damask rooms. I make no apology for not attending you, ma'am, but"—glancing at some valuable china that she was putting up—"I cannot leave my post."

"What! is little Maggy here?" asked Mrs. Cleveland, as the child made her curtsey to them. "Come here, little one," kindly taking the readily-given hand. "Good morning, Mrs. Scott; we will no longer disturb you."

Guided by the child, room after room was visited—some were still furnished; and greatly was Mr. Rüdiger pleased, not only with the pictures and costly articles of taste which adorned them, but with the lovely and varied views which the advantageous situation of the

house afforded. They entered the grand drawing-room ; but Mrs. Cleveland, who knew what would really interest their guest, did not allow the coverings to be removed from any part of the furniture, justly thinking that the four perfect specimens of ancient art, which adorned the walls, gave a better idea of taste and wealth, than all the silks and velvets that the looms of Lyons ever sent forth.

Thence they went to the splendidly-furnished rooms which had formerly belonged to the mother of their young conductress ; and here was an object which, at once, fixed the attention of all ; for neither the clergyman nor his wife had ever seen these apartments.

Years ago, when the stern order came to unfurnish them, a consultation had been held by the steward and Mrs. Scott, respecting the necessity of removing one particular picture—the portrait of Rupert Rochedale's Indian wife. It was a large copy that a celebrated artist had made from a miniature, and with which her husband was so much pleased, that

he gave it to his nephew—the original remaining with Alice.

The former Lady Rochedale, consistent in her prejudices and aversions, would never consent to admit this most exquisite production into the family portrait-gallery, and her son did not venture to insist on it, whatever might have been his secret intentions for the future; and when his cousin took up her brief abode with them, he had it placed in her sitting-room, having one day heard her say, in reference to the miniature, that she was never weary of looking at, and admiring it. And, truly, well was it worth gazing at, and well did it merit the admiration it always excited and drew forth.

The faultless loveliness of that innocent—that almost childish face—the grace of that reclining form—the magnificence of that oriental costume—all attracted instant attention, which the harmony of the details never failed to keep alive. There are the large almond-shaped eyes—the lovely mouth—the

smooth, well-defined forehead, with so much more of intellectual development than such faces usually possess; then, the hands and arms, such perfect models; while the slight dark tinge, on the peachy cheek, gave a glow and richness that increased the striking effect of the whole.

Maggy, look up, and behold your ancestress! Maggy, step forth, and proclaim yourself the descendant of that eastern princess! Raise your eyes, little child, and in spite of your homely cottager's dress, they may well claim consanguinity with her, who sits there surrounded with tokens of boundless wealth!

Now, the debate between the two worthy servants was regarding this portrait. Mrs. Scott contended that it belonged to Sir Rupert—it had only been lent to Miss Alice. The steward, on the contrary, looking at the spirit, not the mere letter of the order, argued that it was evident their master wished to have everything removed, that should remind him of his cousin—*ergo*, this portrait ought to go.

Mrs. Scott, unconvinced, replied, that—if they did wrong in retaining it, Sir Rupert could easily send it away—but once gone, he could never reclaim it. And so the sweet face continued to look down on the occupants of that room, who, in return, looked up at its beauty and wondered.

“Himmel!” exclaimed the impulsive German, still an enthusiast—still full of sentiment—“what an exquisite thing that is!—is it a portrait, or some happy inspiration, which the painter has rendered imperishable? what eyes!—what a perfect contour of face! Who is it, my friend?” turning to Mrs. Cleveland.

“I suppose some fancy piece,” she replied, not knowing the truth, “some imaginary Houri or Peri, brought from the east by Mr. Rupert Rochedale, the uncle of the present Baronet. He spent the greater part of his life there, and returned loaded with money.”

“Ah!” was Von Rüdiger’s only reply—he scarcely having heard what she said, for his whole attention was given to the painting,

which his imagination had already made the subject of some wild tale of oriental romance ; and when the Clevelands returned from the adjoining room, to which they had vainly summoned him, they found him still gazing at the portrait, with undiminished interest.

“ My good friend,” said Mrs. Cleveland, laughing, and laying her hand on his arm, “ wake out of your dream—there are still many things well worth seeing.”

Roused from his reverie, with a sigh, he allowed himself to be led away, murmuring, as he took his farewell glance, “ but nothing that can equal that face !”

“ You alarm me,” she gaily returned ; “ I begin to fear that we shall carry a heartless guest back to the Parsonage : this is a more desperate case than that of Pygmalion.”

But her gaiety met with no response from the earnest and imaginative organist ; not even a splendid view from the gallery could recal his attention, and when an oriel of stained glass, on which were the arms of

the family, failed to attract him, Mrs. Cleveland gave up the attempt as hopeless, and was meditating a speedy return, when Maggy opened the door of Miss Rochedale's boudoir.

This room had been furnished and given up to Edith when she returned from London, on her fourteenth birthday; and here she and Miss Durnsford passed the greater part of their time, pursuing those studies, for which a few hours every day were now quite sufficient.

Having been so lately furnished, all remained undisturbed. The handsome bookcases were filled with a well-chosen selection of books, the whole arrangement being elegant but simple, for the chief ornaments were marble busts of her parents, and a few water-colour drawings by eminent artists. - Between the windows stood a satin wood grand piano; and the moment they entered, on this the attention of Mr. Rüdiger was fixed. He drew near to examine some music that lay on the canterbury, then raised the leather cover, as if to look at the curious clouding of the

wood, but perceiving the key invitingly left in the lock, with a half audible, "Is it permitted?" he opened the instrument.

He ran his fingers along the keys—his eyes sparkled—his whole countenance kindled, and, mechanically as it were, drawing forth the stool, he sat down, and with his head raised, as if contemplating some pleasing object, he gave vent to his excited feelings, in the language of music.

No one interrupted him; a spell was over them; and as the pathetic, and, occasionally, the mournful, sweetness stole into their hearts, a sympathy of feeling was established which none seemed willing to break. Gradually his excitement passed away, and, lingering on a few plaintive chords, till they sounded faintly, as if in the distance, he rose, and resumed more of his usual quiet manner, though still he spoke not.

During his extemporaneous performance, Mr. and Mrs. Cleveland had been too much occupied in watching the varied expression of

his countenance to notice the conduct of Maggy. She had never before seen a musical instrument, and, though there was a power within which readily acknowledged and felt Nature's music in the song of the birds, the whisper of the breeze, the murmur of the waterfall, and the ripple of the river, as it flowed along near the lodge, this was the first time she had heard sounds and combinations such as a master-hand alone can draw forth. The start she gave when a few bold chords were struck—the flush that rose to her cheeks—the flash in her eyes—all told of astonishment and delight. But, as the musician called up rich, though mournful tones, she grew pale with emotion, and heavy tears hung on her long eyelashes.

“This is a superb instrument, both in look and tone,” said Mrs. Cleveland; “indulge me by playing that mass I was blundering through, last night, on my old piano.”

“Willingly!” replied Von Rüdiger; and, resuming his seat, he began. But he was now

able to notice those around him, and, after returning Mrs. Cleveland's pleased look, he glanced towards Maggy, who had gradually drawn close to him, and fixed her eyes intently on his countenance.

Struck with some vague associations that came into his mind, he watched her attentively, and, addressing a few words in French to his friends—still continuing his playing—bade them watch her also. Her head was raised, and moved, as if keeping time; the lips seemed trying to imitate the sound; and so fixed, so wrapt, was the attitude, that, but for the varying emotions that flitted across the childish face, she might have been thought a statue.

An idea entered Mrs. Cleveland's head.

The morning service, at her husband's church, always commenced by the congregation singing one verse of the hundredth Psalm; and she knew that Mrs. Wilson had taught her little girl to join in it.

"Play the hundredth," she whispered—"glide gradually into it."

As he obeyed, a look of satisfaction came on the child's face; and when the full swelling sound of the well-known tune met her ear; as if urged by an irresistible impulse, the sweet voice of the young listener broke forth with the remembered words, and accompanied the solemn measure with a precision that was quite remarkable.

"Well done, Maggy!" was the indiscreet remark of Mr. Cleveland, who was really astonished and pleased; "let us have that again."

But, when being urged to repeat it, she attempted to obey, her voice was drowned in vainly-repressed sobs.

"She cannot," said the more experienced musician; "it was an inspiration that compelled her. But you are fond of music, are you not?" he asked, addressing the child; and he good-naturedly played some simple airs, which she said were very pretty; but there was no return of what Von Rüdiger properly termed the inspiration.

It was not, however, forgotten by him;

and, attracted towards her by some undefined feeling, which he loved to think was a kind of mystical affinity, the dreamy metaphysician was a frequent guest at the side lodge, where his unaffected manners and earnest kindness soon won the confidence of Mrs. Wilson, and made her willingly consent that Maggy should sing her infant school songs, and read her childlike books of poetry, to please him.

The result of this was, that he spoke so enthusiastically of the child's musical talent and taste, that Mrs. Cleveland seconded his wish to be allowed to give her some instruction, in a science, in which nature had so eminently qualified her to excel.

With him there were no prejudices to overcome—no inconsistency to argue away, as to teaching music to a cottager's child; in his country, it formed part of the national education. And when Mr. Cleveland seemed disposed to laugh at his intention, Von Rüdiger gravely reminded him of the execrable noise made in his own pretty church, by the tuneless

choir, as an argument in favour of his plan, in which—encouraged by Mrs. Cleveland—he meant to persist.

“But my good friend,” said the vicar, “you refuse to give us the pleasure of your company beyond a few weeks, what, therefore, will be the use of introducing, with your *musical* crotchets, some of a less harmless nature, which may injure the future of this poor child? You will only have time to awaken a taste, that had better never be roused.”

“I shall, perhaps, have time to guide a taste which, with her organization, would certainly, even under disadvantages, be developed. While the cathedral is being repaired, I have time to be a wanderer; already you and Mrs. Cleveland are powerful magnets here; this is one little attraction the more.”

In consequence of this arrangement, Maggy was often at the Parsonage; and the results, to her, were very different from those which Mr. Cleveland, though not unreasonably, had feared.

It brought her into constant intercourse with his amiable and well-educated wife, on whom, in her turn, the little girl exercised a most desirable effect.

Two years ago, the death of an only child had left a void which was felt alike in her home and heart ; nothing yet had filled or concealed it. Maggy, it is true, never occupied the place of this loved and lamented one, but sometimes she stood, as it were, before it ; she partly hid the empty space, and, by engaging the interest and attention of the sorrowing mother, prevented her from dwelling so constantly on her loss.

Though there were many deficiencies in Maggy's education which Mrs. Cleveland's superior attainments enabled her to supply, she was astonished to find scarcely anything to remove ; no vulgar habits from which refinement, though allied with the utmost benevolence, naturally shrinks ; no low sentiments, which the greatest subsequent care fails to eradicate. The simplicity and truth, the

integrity and kindness, which characterized Mrs Wilson, had produced their natural fruit in the child; whose loving confidence, whose tearful but ready avowal of error, and whose eager offers of service marked the connection between them, as plainly as daylight does the rising of the sun.

It was during one of Mrs. Cleveland's visits to the side lodge, soon after Maggy was welcomed to the Parsonage, that she first learned she was not Mrs. Wilson's child—for it was nearly two years after Wilson's death, that Sir Rupert gave the living to Mr. Cleveland, and then the declining health and death of their daughter for some time kept her a stranger to her husband's parishioners.

“Who, then, were her parents?”

Mrs. Wilson did not know. The name of Evelyn was quite strange to all in those parts; but she said she always fancied they were gentlefolks — Sir Rupert had intimated as much.

“But has he never spoken of his intentions

respecting this child?" persisted Mrs. Cleveland, too much interested to hesitate at enquiring. "How does he mean her to be educated?"

"I have never asked," was the reply. "Sir Rupert has taken no notice of Maggy, since the moment when she was laid upon my bosom. He allows me a sum much more than sufficient for her maintenance, and hitherto, for many reasons, I have kept silent. I believe the life she leads with me much better suited to her health, which is delicate, than if she went to live at the Chase, for I think, ma'am, she would not bear the confinement and teaching most young ladies have;—but that is not all." (And Mrs. Wilson's mild countenance wore an unwonted look of anger.) "I deeply feel all the kindness of Sir Rupert and my lady to me, but my gratitude does not make me insensible to their neglect of my precious darling. How Sir Rupert can deny himself the pleasure of noticing the little creature his bounty feeds

and clothes, is strange enough—but that Lady Rochedale should never stop to say a word, or make the least remark, does vex me. Master Basil—God bless him!—dear young gentleman!—is the only one who is kind to her. However, ma'am, I fully intend, when the family return, to speak, for she is turned of eight—in truth, is nearly nine years old; and, though it will be a dark day to me when the light of my heart is taken away, if it is good for her, it must—it shall be done.”

The true woman's heart of Mrs. Cleveland, suggested a remedy — but her project had but just presented itself, and saying that there was a way by which Maggy might have every benefit, without being entirely separated from her first friend; she returned home, musing on her plan, and looking at it in various ways, before she named it to her husband.

CHAPTER XIII.

‘A combination, and a form indeed,
Where every God did seem to set his seal
To give the world assurance of a man.’

SHAKSPEARE.

“I HAD no idea that Edith would have entered so fully into London amusements, and dissipations; or regret them so deeply,” remarked Lady Rochedale, when she received the farewell call of Miss Malcolm, previous to their departure for Devonshire.

Miss Malcolm, who mentally assigned another cause for Edith’s reluctance to leave London, paused a moment, to think whether

she should correct Lady Rochedale's error, as to the cause of regret ; but remembering that she had no right to intrude her suspicions, as by so doing she might appear to have acted the undignified part of a spy ; she returned the common-place answer—

“ Oh, it is natural at Edith's age to enter with zest into the gaieties of the metropolis,” and laughingly added—“ were I not in need of rest and quiet, I myself might find our projected Highland exile ‘ too innocent ’ to suit the taste that has lately been so over stimulated.”

No wonder that to Edith the last few months had passed as in a bower of bliss. At that happy age, when the restraints of educational discipline are relaxed, and those of society have not been imposed ; she and Minnie, under the care of Miss Durnsford, entered freely into all the amusements suited to their years—and by the diplomacy of Lord Blaymore, were often smuggled into many, which, like Eleusinian mysteries, are closed to

all but the initiated—namely, such as have been introduced and are out.

Many a pleasure of this forbidden kind did they owe to his good-natured contrivance or mediation ; for he was, by this time, too well recognised as a spoiled and self-willed member of fashion, to have any of his requests refused ; and was much too careless of remark, to deny himself the amusement of trepanning Miss Durnsford and the girls on to some debatable ground, where their awkwardness and fear of detection repaid all his trouble. In the disguise of peasant girls, they had access to the most splendid *déjeuner* of the season ; and by his irresistible pleadings with his aunt, they were permitted, under his escort, and, from an unobserved balcony, to see a fancy ball, which was the talk of the whole world of fashion. Who, then, can wonder that the heads of the young girls were turned, or that their hearts were endangered ?

Basil and Percy also profited by his experience and influence, and were indebted to him

for many pleasures, which Sir Rupert would never have thought of procuring for them. On these occasions, no one could be more amiable than Gerald; there was an unconscious condescension in thus adapting himself to his young country relatives, that made the boys think him the finest fellow in the world, and speak of him as such; and if Edith and Minnie said nothing, like the celebrated parrot, they thought the more.

Nor were Sir Rupert and his wife insensible to his genial and winning manners—the latter, especially, was pleased; for she knew that, during his last visit to the Chase, her husband had freed him from some heavy pecuniary embarrassments, and she now received these attentions as proofs of his wish to keep out of temptation, no less than of his gratitude for much kindness.

Such was partly the case. Sir Rupert had not only freed him with promptness and delicacy, but he had taken the opportunity to appeal, in so earnest a manner, to his sense of

honour—had pointed out, in so friendly a tone and spirit, the ruinous and disreputable course he was pursuing, that Gerald gave a voluntary promise, that the future should make everyone forget the past; and this promise he had hitherto kept.

In justice to him, it must also be said, that he was as unconscious of the influence his daily kindness produced on the girls, as he was careless of exciting this feeling—neither of them, in the least, interested him, beyond the amusement their ignorance of life and society afforded him. Though Edith was sixteen, and her friend very nearly as old, the mere presence of Miss Durnsford was, in his mind, so suggestive of pinafores and the school-room, that, as children, he considered them, and as such, treated them.

He was himself, already, so old in the ways and habits of a class that formed a large portion of continental society, where elegant manners are a sufficient substitute for good morals; where wit and repartee, are better

received than intelligence and learning ; where fashion, like charity, covers a multitude of sins ; where pleasures soon pall, amusements become tedious and insipid ; where youth is *blasé*, aged, and apathetic ; that Edith's delight in trifles, seemed childish ; the excitement that was kindled by a flower-show, reminded him of a baby and its rattle ; and that any one out of leading-strings, could really care for a pic-nic at Richmond, seemed to him quite astonishing. But, by his inexperienced young companions, this indifference was mistaken for superiority, and rendered his attentions doubly valuable, and his society doubly dangerous.

Beautiful as an Apollo in face and form, Gerald was eminently endowed with the charm of a most sweet temper, and gifted with that gay, insinuating look and tone, which few can resist ; and, though there were moments, when, under the influence of evil passions, his countenance assumed an expression that betrayed their power ; there were other times when the faultless features were lighted up with

genuine gaiety, and when heartfelt mirth sparkled on the whole face. Rarer still, but oh! most dangerous was it, when a thoughtful expression stole over the noble brow, and lingered with a saddened look in those eloquent eyes; this, this gave all that was wanting to perfect a face, none ever looked on and forgot.

But now this remembrance must be all that is left to those with whom he had lately almost lived. A total separation was contemplated. Not only were the Rochedales going to Devonshire till the next spring, but Miss Durnsford had arranged to take her niece to Paris, where a residence for two years would, she hoped, perfect Minnie in those accomplishments by which, like herself, she might become independent. Both Sir Rupert and Lady Rochedale repeated their wish, that Minnie might remain with Edith, but this her aunt, more decidedly than ever, declined—perhaps, because her former reasons remained in full force—perhaps, because she remarked that,

this time, Edith did not second her parents' proposal.

Percy declared that his was the hardest fate ; and was only reconciled to his destiny, by receiving a very cordial invitation from the Malcolms to join them in Scotland when his holidays set him free—a kindness which Sir Rupert, in spite of Basil's disapproval, advised him to accept, rather than follow them into Devonshire.

“ You must make and secure friends wherever you can, my dear boy,” he said ; “ of us, you are already sure. In your profession, a young man whose associations are contracted, or whose feelings and habits are shy and reserved, enters life at a disadvantage. Do not, however, mistake me : I do not recommend an indiscriminate intimacy—quite the reverse—but cultivate society, and, while showing, by your independent sentiments and actions, that you are seeking neither service nor patronage, accept frankly council and kindness.”

CHAPTER XIV.

‘No sense have they of ills to come,
No care beyond to-day,
Yet see how all around them wait,
The ministers of human fate,
And black misfortune’s baleful train.’

GRAY.

AGAIN winter has passed, and the sweet breath of spring is everywhere inhaled ; and Basil’s health had improved so much during their sea-side residence, that Sir Rupert felt divided between his wish to secure his son this benefit, and his desire to see his family once more settled at home.

At the earnest entreaty of Edith, seconded by the tacit acquiescence of her mother, the whole party were to return by the way of London, and remain there for a few weeks. But, as it was now Percy's Easter holidays, Basil, who was pining to see the Chase, proposed that—leaving his mother and sister with the Malcolms—his father, Percy, and himself should precede them—and, as he said, drive away any evil spirits, in the shape of decorators and upholsterers, who might still be haunting the place.

Sir Rupert, who shared his son's enthusiastic love of their ancestral home, readily acceded to this amendment; and, having left Lady Rochedale and Edith in friendly quarters, away they started for the north.

How happy the young travellers were!—and how happy Sir Rupert was to witness it! Basil, though far inferior in stature to his handsome kinsman, looked so well; his intelligent face became so full of feeling as they approached home, and he pointed out with

such affectionate earnestness each well-remembered object, and seemed to identify himself with the spot where he had spent almost his whole life,—that his father, recognizing his own tastes in these tokens of local association, thought of the time when, with his son a grown-up man by his side, they should together plan for the improvement of property so dear to both.

At the last stage they were met by the barouche and the four splendid bays; and, though the baronet smiled at this ostentatious outbreak on the part of his steward, he was quite in the mood to receive it as a mark of attachment and respect. As they now rapidly drew nearer, and as every tree, every turn in the road drew forth some anecdote connected with home, the delight of Basil increased; but when, at the next winding of the road, the noble building, still more than a mile off, burst on the sight, distinctly seen through the thin foliage of the early season; when the broad river, and the historical ruins of the

old bridge, presented themselves, Basil sank back and covered his face with his hands.

“Here is the lodge!” exclaimed Percy—who, with Sir Rupert, had respected his emotion, and kept silent; “and look, sir, there is a regular turn-out of the whole clan—from the commander-in-chief to the little drummer;” and, wholly uninfluenced by that feeling of shyness which repressed the sounds of welcome all longed to utter, he stood up in the carriage and gave a shout, which was repeated, again and again, by the servants and a large body of the tenantry.

Sir Rupert rose, took off his hat, and bowed. Basil nodded familiarly to the crowd, for he could not yet speak, and extended his hand to the old steward; while Percy, discerning at the far end, a well-known group, darted out of the carriage, with the exclamation:—“Maggy and Pet! I declare—and Mrs. Wilson! How do you do?” and, without any ceremony, he seized the first, and, as well as the mad gambols of the dog permitted, carried her to Basil, who had just alighted.

“What a fairy thing it is,” said the young soldier; “she has scarcely grown a bit, except her eyes! Why, you monkey, you have not forgotten us!”

A pressure of the hand by which he retained her, and the smile of delight that spread over the whole face, was a satisfactory reply, and Basil kindly shook hands with Mrs. Wilson, saying—

“Oh, no! Maggy neither forgets nor is forgotten; above all, I hope she remembers how to make flies and mend nets. Do not wait for us, my dear father; Percy and I have lots of things to settle here!”

But his father had also left the carriage, and was slowly walking up the grand avenue, and, infected by the example of the boys, was talking with unusual freedom to several of his attached tenants, who had come from a distance to pay him this mark of respect, after the first long absence from home that he had made for years.

Though much business had accumulated,

and though for many days Sir Rupert had scarcely a moment's leisure, there was something in the idea of being at home, which made this unremitting employment a delight ; and when, at the end of a week, he declared so much had been done, that he could afford himself a holiday, it was said with a look and tone very rare from the grave Sir Rupert Rochedale.

“ Basil has been overhauling the old boat by the bridge, sir,” said Percy ; “ but though it is thoroughly mended, I do not think it well balanced ; I should like you to give your opinion before we use it.”

“ Oh, Percy has grown quite knowing and critical in all nautical matters,” replied Basil, “ and because he can swim like a fish, and talk learnedly of rowing matches and Thames wherries, he despises an old friend, which looks as gay as a lady in a ball-dress !”

“ Confess, however, Basil,” rejoined Percy, “ that, in spite of this finery, the young lady is rather awry.”

"We will examine it carefully to-day," replied Sir Rupert ; "the horses shall meet us in two hours time at the bridge, and we will ride over to the dean, with whom I have some business."

"Exactly the morning for a canter," remarked Basil ; "come, Percy, we will precede my father. I have a little present for Maggy, whom I have hardly seen ; and I must try and make Mrs. Wilson understand about a net. I saw something in Devonshire which, I think, she can adapt to our river."

And, arm-in-arm, the two friends were soon seen wending their way towards the side lodge, where Maggy was made happy by the possession of a pretty work-box, Basil's gift ; and Mrs. Wilson, by finding that he still retained all his kind interest for old familiar faces. He left Percy, busy fastening on a collar, which he had brought down for Pet ; it was a very handsome affair, indeed, and the bright red morocco showed well on the glossy black coat of the well-kept animal—and

Maggy's heart bounded with pleasure, when, on a shining silver plate, she read, neatly engraved:—"I am Pet—little Maggy's dog;" and a strange method she took of expressing her thanks, for, instead of tendering them to the tall handsome giver, she seized the dog and buried her face in his neck.

"She is sometimes a shy little thing, sir," said Mrs. Wilson, in apology, "but always very grateful."

"I understand her," replied Percy, with one of his smiles, that made his face almost glorious, and, casting a look at the child, he left the lodge, and turned up a side path, expecting to overtake Basil. He did not, however, see him, but on reaching a slightly elevated spot, he looked round, and perceived Sir Rupert walking towards the appointed place of meeting.

Percy hastened to join him, and they proceeded together; and when within ten minutes walk of the bridge, he hallooed, and was answered by a voice that came from the direc-

tion of the ruins, from which they were still more distant. Running forward, Percy soon attained a point whence he could command a good view along the river, and saw Basil, evidently very busy unmooring the boat, already mentioned.

A feeling of terror, a vague sense of danger seized him, and shouting to his cousin to desist, he flew, rather than ran towards him. Returning his shout with a merry peal of laughter, Basil redoubled his efforts — one minute, and Percy would have been in time—that minute was decisive.

Without waiting to remark that the oars were on the heavy side of the boat, Basil jumped in, and with his pole gave it an impulse that sent it nearly half-way across.

Percy saw it all—but with wonderful presence of mind he now refrained from all exclamations of alarm, though a deadly terror, for a second, made his heart almost cease to beat.

A joyous cry of victory burst from the

lips of Basil — it was heard by his father ; who now, for the first time understood the cause of Percy's flight — scarcely had the triumphant note died away, when there was a plunge — a cry of distress — then another plunge, quickly followed—and, for a brief interval, sense and the power of motion seemed to have abandoned the father. The next instant he was wildly rushing to the place, of which he had never lost sight—when, merciful Providence!—he beheld the head of Percy just above the water, with one hand bravely battling for the shore.

“Shout for help?” cried he, in an exhausted voice. “Keep steady, and hand me an oar.”

Mechanically Sir Rupert at once obeyed, and happily his first cries were answered by the groom, who was waiting with the horses. Mounting one, and leaving the others to their fate, he was quickly by his master's side, and prepared to plunge in ; but Percy, though fast losing strength — for he had the senseless

Basil to support—still retained his full senses, and cried out, faintly—

“Keep away! a kick from your horse would be fatal.”

And now he neared the bank — so that Sir Rupert, who held himself ready to aid, having thrown off coat and waistcoat, plunged in, and received, as he believed — the lifeless body of that son who was to him, almost all the world.

“Summon help!” said Percy, drawing deep sobs from exhaustion; “lay him partly down—carefully;” for again the dreadful spasm wrung the heart of his father, as he felt the beloved head lay so heavily on it; and, looking at the pale cheek, all power to exert himself seemed to forsake him.

“Chafe his hands!” said Percy, once more making an effort to give directions, which Sir Rupert was unable to do; and he tore open Basil’s dress, and felt anxiously for some pulsation.

“It beats!—this is only a faint;” and he

now became alive to the necessity of rousing the father. "He has not been in a second longer than I."

He had said enough—hope returned to the miserable parent; and, chafing his son's hands and limbs with his own warm, dry garments, by the time the terrified servants had flocked down with the mattress and blankets, Basil had opened his eyes, and looked vacantly round; then, with a deep sigh, fell on his father's arm, and closed them.

"My God, I thank thee!" exclaimed Sir Rupert, pressing him convulsively to his breast.

"Let him walk a few steps!" suggested the steward; "it will restore circulation." And he made a movement, as if to relieve his master of a load. But, though trembling in every limb, and deadly pale, he jealously kept his arm round his son, and assisted him to rise.


"I am better—I can walk now," said Basil,

rapidly recovering ; “ but where is Percy—is he hurt ? ”

“ God bless you, my brave boy !—God reward you, my dear fellow ! ” said Sir Rupert, struggling against his deep emotion ; “ but, good heavens ! my ungrateful forgetfulness—hasten home ; you will be killed, standing there still in your dripping state.”

“ Oh, no—never mind me—I have often been in the same condition, therefore I know what to recommend for Basil ; put him in warm blankets till your Galen comes ; and let some one summon him at once ; Basil is not so hardened as I,” and he ran off to avoid the publicity of Sir Rupert’s gratitude, and to meet them in dry garments.

Basil was obliged to keep his bed, not only that day, but for many succeeding days ; and, when after a wearisome tossing to and fro, during which he was conscious of nothing but a burning thirst, while he seemed to realize the fable of Tantalus, and to be plunged in water which fled from his parched lips ;



when he opened his heavy eyelids, the face of his mother bending over him, was the first object he recognised.

She had been summoned the evening of the accident; the doctor being apprehensive of fever—and escorted by Lord Blaymore, she and Edith set off. Gerald remained at the Chase till all imminent danger was over; and then with Percy, whose heart was very heavy at the thought of leaving his dearest friend still so ill, and his kind family so sorrowful—they both prepared to return to town.

“Percy, you will be sure to come if I ask it?” said Basil; “remember we are brothers now, though no name can make us better friends—so promise.”

“Of course, my dear fellow, I should come, even if we were in the middle of a drill,” replied Percy, striving to speak cheerfully; “and the expectation of soon coming among you all, will keep me on my good behaviour, lest I should be in durance vile for some outbreak, or doing penance for some neglect.

Cheer up, old fellow, and get strong; for many a mad-cap scamper we will have together."

Basil faintly smiled; "Farewell, dear and best friend," he said; "never forget that you have made my father deeply your debtor; love him, and thus let his debt become larger."

And when Percy left Sir Rupert's private room, whither he had gone at his desire to say adieu, traces of strong emotion were on his countenance, such as were very rare, where the usual expression was the frank, unrestrained look of gay and careless youth.

CHAPTER XV.

‘ But oh ! why didst thou not stay here below,
To bless us with thy heaven-loved innocence ?’

MILTON.

“ WITHOUT doubting your general good sense, my dear friend, I certainly did not give you credit for so much wise forbearance towards your little village pupil,” observed Mr. Cleveland to the German, when he and his wife returned to the Parsonage, after an absence of a fortnight. “ I consider, that you sat for the original, of ‘ *Il Fanatico per la Musica*,’ and expected to find poor

Maggy in a most approved state of pallor — a precocious musical prodigy, and fit for one of those legalized murders which are every season perpetrated, before an admiring audience, on the person of some helpless, friendless child.”

“God forbid,” replied Von Rüdiger, with a shudder; “I freeze when I think of this slaughter of the innocents. No, no; I am too sincere an admirer of genius to strangle it at its birth—too true a worshipper of St. Cecilia’s divine art, not to foster it with all the care formerly given by those who had charge of the sacred fire. I have, in this case, been anxious only to *direct*, never to stimulate—to guide, not to urge; and, though you will laugh at me, I am mixing a few German lessons with our musical ones, and have already slightly disgusted her by some long lectures on harmony, which, of course, she did not understand.”

“Bravo! bravo!—and for a merciful man,” continued Mr. Cleveland, shrugging his shoul-

ders. "You have acted very consistently, indeed! Ah! you theorists!—you theorists!—well for us practical, prosaic mortals, that you are so seldom attended to!"

"Pardon me, my dear," interrupted Mrs. Cleveland—"you must not be allowed to march off with fancied victory. I think I understand our friend's reasoning, and, if so, I agree in the wisdom of his proceedings!"

"Oh!" replied her husband, laughing heartily, "there is nothing like having a lady for an ally when it comes to close reasoning. She *thinks* she understands the argument, and at once agrees. Really, my love, you will not easily surpass that."

"Have your joke, and enjoy it," she good-humouredly returned;—"laugh, but listen. You have had no opportunity of understanding this child as Herr Von Rüdiger and I have. She was here quite enough before we left, for me to discover acquirements and feelings I should never have expected from her station; but then, I was quite ignorant of the very

superior character and mind of her mother. With a remarkably fine organization, this little girl has been placed in very favourable circumstances for its happy development ; and though there are many deficiencies arising from her lonely life, they may be easily supplied ; while all the advantages of a being uncontaminated by injurious association are preserved. The fond, loving little thing ! how prodigally she lavishes her affection and gratitude, where she can discover the least claim for them !”

“ I see—I see—she has, at any rate, been bribing you pretty liberally with these same gifts,” said Mr. Cleveland, looking well pleased at the glowing countenance of his wife ; “ and I suspect she has been no niggard to our susceptible friend here.”

“ Truly, she has not,” he answered ; “ and, perceiving all this rich endowment of affection, and knowing the trials that attend a warm, loving nature, in a cold, unloving world, I paused before I awoke too early, or gave a

permanent tendency to, a talent which derives some of its finest inspirations from all that is most elevated—all that is most tender in the human heart. Already her taste for poetry is extraordinary ; she seems intuitively to reject all that is common, or rather I mean all that is vulgar ; she is uncomfortable, if forced to listen to the miserable trash, which is printed to look like verse. Ah ! what a voice she will have, if it is not spoiled ! But here comes *meine fee*, my fairy !”—as a little form hastened over the lawn, and, darting in at the French window, sprang into the arms of Mrs. Cleveland, whose face and hands she covered with kisses.

“Come, come, Maggy,”—cried Mr. Cleveland, a pleased spectator of a scene that verified all that his wife had said, and made him hope that she had found an object on whom to bestow the love that had been dormant since their daughter's death—“save one for me !” And he tenderly pressed his lips on the animated face, lifted up for a caress, by no means unusual.

“And Herr Von Rüdiger!” cried Maggy, who seemed to have lost all her shyness, and to feel quite at home.

“And what is the news from the Chase?—When do the family return?” asked Mr. Cleveland.

“Not for six weeks, at the earliest. Sir Rupert came for two days since you left; and Mrs. Scott told my mother yesterday, that Lady Rochedale would stay in London, some time, after her master returned. I hope,” she continued, addressing Mrs. Cleveland, “that you think your birds and flowers look well? The last frost killed a great many things that were exposed, but the others have escaped.”

“My birds look as happy as if they had never found out my absence; and the flowers are beautiful. Now, run away for to-day; I shall be at the lodge early to-morrow, and will arrange with your mother about your coming as usual.—Good bye!”

And away bounded Maggy, singing and

dancing, and thinking that the world was full of good people, because she could reckon some half-dozen who were kind to her. But, except Basil and Percy, she always forgot the family at the Chase. Happy age!—when what is unpleasant is unremembered. Happy child! whose little world was so worthily filled!

From the meeting just described, it may readily be inferred, that what the kindness of Mrs. Cleveland had suggested, the same kindness enabled her to perform. Mrs. Wilson eagerly closed with a proposal, that Maggy should, once or twice a-week, spend part of the day at the Parsonage, and be employed by Mrs. Cleveland in such a way as might, eventually, be useful to her.

Gradually, these visits were more frequent, till, when the weather permitted, scarcely a day passed without Maggy spending part of it with her sensible and accomplished friend; and as the latter became acquainted with the excellent foundation that had been laid for

the child's education, so did her respect increase for the woman, whose unassuming judgment, and unparaded information had directed it.

But Mrs. Cleveland did not intend to let her interest stop at the occasional help she now gave, or at the still more irregular lessons of the eccentric organist. She only awaited the return of Sir Rupert, to ask his permission to educate Maggy, so as to make her a child and friend to herself; or, if her life were not spared, to qualify the child for filling some station less equivocal than that of a lady's-maid or dress-maker.

Lady's-maid! or dress-maker! Heavens! what a notion! The grand-daughter of a Rochedale a lady's-maid! The daughter of Alice Rochedale, his own cousin, a dress-maker!

Turn not proudly away, Sir Rupert, but listen to the stern voice of truth, and reply to its questions. Who, for more than nine years, has allowed this helpless scion of your

ancient family to live with the widow of your servant? Did *you* ever care to ascertain that that widow was one degree superior to the rest of her class? Were *you* ever anxious that no low sentiments—no ignoble thoughts—should degrade the mind of the innocent orphan so solemnly left to your charge? Lady's-maid! Why, your housekeeper orders her about, and your liveried lackeys address her as Maggy!—Maggy Wilson!

In your pride and hardness, you have cast from you a priceless gem! Strangers have picked it up, and worn it as their bosom ornament!

But Basil's accident and illness, for the present, prevented Mrs. Cleveland from seeking an interview with Sir Rupert, who was now wholly engrossed by the very delicate state of his son's health.

Though he recovered from his fever, and was again with his family, and again seen about the grounds, there was a languor in his movements, a fitful excitement in his

temper, succeeded by utter exhaustion, that made friends grave—that blanched his mother's cheek with unuttered apprehension, and wrung his father's heart with agony.

Again was Devonshire talked of;—even Madeira was hinted at. But the mere proposal of moving was so unpleasant to the invalid, that his father trembled to impart the pang which, it was evident, leaving the Chase, would cause.

And, truly, all was so beautiful there, it was no wonder that Basil clung fondly to such fair scenes. Far and near the eye rested on so much that was full of grace and splendour — far and near all was so lovely. There was all the majesty of nature in the distant prospects—there was all the magic of art in the gorgeous gardens, in the stately avenues, in the skilfully-grouped plantations: so that it was difficult to believe that health could be found in any other spot—or that any other place could be more attractive. And Basil loved to watch the ever varying effect of sun

and cloud—to inhale the delicious perfume of the beautiful flowers—to hear the rustle of the golden corn, and the lark singing up in the blue sky ; and almost every day he was driven, for about half an hour, to the side-lodge, on purpose to have Maggy read to him pieces of poetry, or extracts which he had folded down ; because, he said, her reading made him remember them, and it was pleasant to repeat them as he lay awake in the still, lonely night. But when the roses faded, so did his strength—when the rich ripe corn was laid low, Basil was frequently for days unable to leave the sofa. Then came the sear and yellow leaf of late autumn ; and the robin's cheerful note was heard by those, on whose hearts the cough of Basil fell as the knell of coming separation. Secretly, at first, had his miserable parents consulted the most eminent physicians—the same reply—the symptoms were unfavourable, but there *had* been similar cases followed by recovery. Then, rendered less desponding by some favourable appear-

ance, and frantically clinging to hope, again they asked of the oracle—and still the same reply—and still Basil lingered on.

Percy's holidays were spent almost entirely in his friend's room. He was never absent when he could be admitted ; and it was inexpressibly touching, indescribably beautiful, to see the youth full of health, hope, and high purpose—in whose veins life flowed freely, strongly—whose habits were all energetic and active—whose intellect was traversing the whole realm of science and knowledge, uncertain on what portion to rest, and whose mental ambition would like to grasp the whole—it was touching—it was beautiful—to see this restless spirit, seated quietly by the couch of his sick friend, lending itself to his fancies—allowing itself to be regulated by his capricious touch, and never wearying of the restraint.

But now Basil pined for a change ; and, as it had been weeks since he had visited the side lodge, he longed to see Mrs. Wilson ; he

remembered her gentle voice, her tender look and manner; and he thought he should like her to come and *help* Mrs. Scott—for even in all the waywardness of suffering, Basil was careful not to hurt the feelings of those, who devoted themselves so freely to his service.

“Dear mother, you look tired—if you will not let me be left alone, send for widow Wilson; she is almost as quiet as you are, and never fidgets on tip-toes like good old Scott.”

So, after a little opposition, Lady Rochedale consented; and Mrs. Wilson was installed as extra nurse, with strict orders to let Mr. Basil have every thing he asked for.

“Where is Maggy?” he enquired, the next morning, when he woke, after having quietly slept for several hours—an event which was communicated to his mother; who, by this time, had been taught to receive such news with gratitude—Oh, the sad teachings of sickness!

“She was asleep last night, sir, when my lady sent for me,” replied Mrs. Wilson—“she

will be sure to come up by half-past seven—she does so every morning to ask after you, ever since you have kept the house ; and rain or shine, I cannot find it in my heart to forbid her.”

“ Why should you ? ” he remarked, eagerly ; “ kind little creature !—ring the bell, and desire Mrs. Scott to keep her. When I am dressed and laid on the sofa, I shall like so much to see her—there is no one, not even Percy, who reads as well as she does ; and she shall sing me some of those chants the old foreigner taught her.”

And being duly instructed how to behave ; to be sure and not cry when she saw Mr. Basil so altered ; to be sure and not weary him ; but to read and sing only as long as he liked—she was introduced to her dying cousin—yes—such was their relationship.

It was, perhaps, well that Maggy had been prepared to find him changed, for her imagination, immediately the interview was proposed, so far outran the reality, in picturing some-

thing painful, perhaps, terrific—that she felt relieved from a feeling of dread, when she looked at the bright eyes and flushed cheek, and saw him surrounded by tokens of wealth and comfort she had never seen by the beds of sickness, when she had occasionally accompanied Mrs. Wilson on her visits of mercy among the poor.

Percy, also, was there ; and his kind smile and cheerful voice did wonders, in dispelling all the dreary images that had thronged thick and fast in her head as she approached the room ; so that when Basil put out his wasted hand, with his usual—“ Well Maggy, and where is Pet ? ”—she felt reassured, and performed his biddings, as to reading and singing, in a manner as unembarrassed as if they had been at the side-lodge.

From this time she was his daily visitor, for perhaps a couple of hours ; and though he wished Percy to take this opportunity for a walk or ride, Percy refused. He was busy making a model fortification, and declared it

was so comfortable to be read and sung to, that he preferred remaining—and Basil then owned that it was a great pleasure to have them both with him, and that he liked to hear Maggy give a lesson in part singing, and to find that Percy was so apt a scholar.

Gradually, also, the unsuspected shreds and scraps, with which the child's mind was stored, were brought forth, by the remarks and questions of the young soldier, and some strange fairy tale, culled from a *Kindermahrchen*, which Von Rüdiger had lately helped her to translate, was capped by Percy with some stirring anecdote of danger, by land and water, which he recalled from the wide range of reading he had traversed.

Once or twice, Lady Rochedale came in, while the trio were together—but her presence evidently threw a restraint over their proceedings—the voices were hushed, and the song or reading broke off abruptly—and, ascertaining that Mrs. Wilson was always in the next room, ready to supply the invalid's wants,

she made a point of sitting with him, only when Percy went out for his regular exercise.

One day, Sir Rupert was passing the room, and though scarcely half-an-hour had elapsed since he had seen Basil, the half-opened door, sheltered by a large screen, tempted him again to look on the face he should soon see no more ; when the sound of a child's voice reading, caused him to pause, and listen as she read—

“Now, just as the gates were opened to let in the men, I looked in after them, and, behold, the city shone like the sun ; the streets, also, were paved with gold, and in them walked many men, with crowns on their heads, and palms in their hands, and golden harps, to sing praises withal.”

Here the reader paused, and, after a minute's silence, Percy said—

“Why do you stop, Maggy? Are you tired? If so, let me read, for I know the story is almost finished.”

“Oh! no—I am not the least tired,” was

the reply—"but what a beautiful place it must be. Shall you not be glad, Basil, when you really see it, and live there?"

"Very glad, indeed!" he answered, with an energy of utterance now, alas! so rare—"and very glad, indeed, to be ready to welcome all who have loved me so well here. Put away the book, dear, and sing me—'There is a land of pure delight.' Percy, sing too; I like to hear you."

And, with prompt obedience, the young voices rose, and fell on the unseen listener's ears, with a beauty and correctness, that filled him with astonishment and delight.

These, then, were the innocent, affectionate hearts, that sat by his son, and cheered him in his last moments; these were the glorious images that filled his mind; this the harmony that soothed his departing spirit; and he thought that God was very gracious; and, though his heart was full of anguish, it was lifted up in deep gratitude, for this undeserved proof of mercy.

Nor was the friendly familiarity of the little girl's address unnoticed, nor the term of endearment used by her cousin forgotten. Sir Rupert seemed still to hear every word quite distinctly, and he was glad to have heard them.

CHAPTER XVI.

‘ He faded, and so calm and meek,
So softly worn, so sweetly weak ;
So tearless, yet so tender, kind,
And grieved for those he left behind !
And not a word of murmur—not
A groan o’er his untimely lot.’

BYRON.

ON, on, very surely, came the destroyer ; but though everyone felt conscious of that shadowy presence from which the living shrink, the influence of Basil’s un murmuring resignation, of his solemn, but sweet submission, was acknowledged by all who approached him.

Death, as thought of when absent from him, appeared in all his gaunt and abhorrent hideousness : he was the remorseless skeleton, mowing down, with cruel unconcern, excellence, youth, beauty ; he was the grim king of terrors, snatching away those best beloved, deaf to our prayers, regardless of our tears. But when those who loved Basil were by his sick couch, a metamorphosis took place. Though still seen, the frightful phantom was, there, transformed into the beautiful youth of Grecian poetry, himself weeping over his extinguished torch—an image, which though it does not lessen our sorrow, removes our fear.

How soothing is the deep meaning of this allegory. Death—young, beautiful, sympathising ! And how well did Basil thus understand it, and peacefully await its near approach.

Even Lady Rochedale, who wept almost incessantly when alone in Basil's company, and seated by the side of this idol, so soon to

be removed from her worship, felt the tranquillising effects of his calmness and peace. She hushed her grief, she disciplined her feelings, and, strengthened by his unselfish example, she forgot herself, and listened to his wishes in the same spirit as that in which they were expressed—a spirit cheered and sustained by the conviction that ‘he was not lost, but gone before’—the spirit of trust and hope, that those he so dearly loved would follow.

He was not occupied with that egotistical feeling which lingers round so many death-beds; he did not cease to care for those who remained, though he was departing; and many found themselves benefitted by his last thoughts, who never knew to whom their thanks were due; for the slightest hint given by him, at this time, was remembered by his father, with all the solemnity of a command, which he could not disobey.

Mr. Cleveland’s visits were a source of unfailing pleasure to Basil; but he always saw

him alone—nothing was allowed to mingle with their holy purport, that might disturb the serenity they imparted; and though the good pastor entered the house as the house of mourning, he was compelled to say, that, to some, heaven begins almost on earth; and that the mortal sometimes seems to put on his immortality here below.

It was about a fortnight after Maggy's daily domestication in Basil's rooms, whose rapidly increasing weakness plainly said that the end was near, when his father, who found it impossible to be long away from him, entered the room, which joined that where Basil was, and hearing no sound, he thought Mrs. Wilson might be watching her sleeping charge; for Percy, he knew, was out.

Gently, therefore, opening the door, he looked in, and, for a few minutes, gazed at the scene.

Of course, the first object that attracted his attention, was his own son, whose face was turned towards the entrance, and whose gentle

breathing gave signs of peaceful sleep. He was partly dressed—the refreshing effects of leaving his bed, and being carried into the next room, were too great to be ever neglected.

With that restless caprice, which accompanies illness, Basil, after having tried several apartments, now occupied the state rooms—those once belonging to Alice. He chose them, because from the windows he could command some of his favourite views; and many a glorious sunset had he silently watched from the one, and from the other had his curtains opened, so that he could catch its rising beams upon the upland lawn. In this richly-furnished chamber he now lay, his pale wasted hand contrasting with the crimson satin *douillette*, and the thin face looking painfully wan, as it reposed on a velvet cushion of the same colour. A small table of curiously-inlaid marbles was placed near; on it were ranged, with scrupulous neatness, some cups and glasses of the most exquisite design, containing the mo-

dicum portion which now sufficed for him. There was no inanimate object on which the eye rested that did not announce taste and luxury.

One sleeping occupant has been noticed—but who then is that little cottage child sleeping so calmly in that embroidered chair?—whence comes that one incongruity in this splendid place? The innocent face was upraised—the lips slightly parted, as if she had fallen asleep while reading from the book which had slipped from her hand—that hand so small, and well-shaped, though brown from exposure, as well as the round and dimpled arm. How out of place is that coarse straw bonnet, that lies on the Axminster carpet. How the common stuff frock contrasts with the brocade of her companion's dressing-gown.

All—all the striking difference was apparent to Sir Rupert at a glance—and the memory of the past, and the consciousness of the present, mingled sadly and painfully in his mind. There was the child of Alice, watching by his

dying son—soothing his last moments in that very room from which every association with her mother had been so carefully removed, as if by so doing, the remembrance of her could be banished also—and as he acknowledged the futility of the attempt, he raised his eyes, and they fell upon the portrait of her beautiful Indian mother. He almost groaned, as this likeness to her he had so loved, met his glance ; and his heart was touched with a sense of the injustice of which, for so many years, he had been guilty towards her orphan.

“ But it shall cease,” he mentally resolved ; and, gently crossing the room, he tenderly raised the sleeping child from her uneasy position. And the soft delicate cheek almost touched his—the pretty head rested quietly on his shoulder ; and, pressing his unconscious burden tenderly to him, he murmured out a blessing on her.

“ She is over tired,” he said, as he resigned her to the astonished Mrs. Wilson ; “ we owe you and her a debt, never to be forgotten—

never to be paid—for your kindness is associated with the season of our bitterest trial. My son is now sleeping—and it seems a refreshing sleep; directly he wakes, let me know.”

But Basil slept on, much longer than usual; and when he awoke, it was clear to all, that it was his last awakening on Earth! He no longer recognised any of the anxious faces, so eagerly watching for the least sign—his unconnected words were of sweet sounds, of pleasant sights, and low murmured expressions of delight. Percy and Maggy seemed chiefly to mingle in his happy visions. “Mother, come!” once fell on the aching ears of her who knew she could no longer retain him; and the feeble tone was, as if he called her to follow. She knelt down, and tried to stifle her sobs on the pillow.

Sir Rupert sat motionless—one hand holding that of his son. His breast heaved with suppressed emotion, and the working of every feature told of the agony that was struggling

to have way. The thin fingers closed on his ;
“My boy—my precious Basil!” he sobbed
out—one last effort—the hand was moved—
Basil laid his cheek on it, softly sighed out—
“My father,”—and, with a smile, entered
into his rest !

CHAPTER XVII.

‘ Let’s take the instant by the forward top ;
For we are old, and on our quick’st decrees
Th’ inaudible and noiseless foot of Time
Steals ere we can effect them.’

SHAKSPEARE.

WEEKS passed away. Let us not intrude on that sorrow which no one can remove—sacred be those tears which no earthly hand can dry; and if we meet the mother clad in her deep mourning garb, let us unobtrusively step aside; and if we see the tall figure of the father bowed down with grief, let us not disturb his solitary walk. The blow has been so recent, no sym-

pathy can lessen the pain—the wound so deep that it is still unhealed !

But Edith—where, all this time, was she ? Did she perform none of the kindly offices, now so needed ? Why are her sisterly cares and watchings untold ? Did she shed no tears ?—did she experience none of that void which made Percy feel, more and more every day, that one dear to him as a brother had been taken away ?

The experience of the last year had made Edith understand herself—the truth was evident at last — she loved Gerald. The wild joy she felt at the prospect of meeting him during their short stay in London—the delight when her hope was realized—told the tale too plainly to be misunderstood ; and her first feeling, when summoned unexpectedly home, was that of disappointment, — for she had thought the weeks to be spent in town, might easily be extended to months—or that some fortunate invitation might induce her mother to return to the Chase without her.

It was, however, some compensation that her cousin returned with them ; and, oh ! the dangerous fascination of his manner, when trying to console his aunt during Basil's early danger. Edith felt it almost a relief when he left them. There was a tumult—a conflict of feeling—almost too powerful—a really deep anxiety about her brother—a joy in Gerald's presence—a dread of betraying herself—which made her long for solitude ; and then the dreamy bliss of thinking of him—of recalling that expressive face, looking tenderly at her and her mother, while, in the rich tones of his matchless voice, he spoke of hope—of recovery.

But, saving that she was under the influence of a master passion, which, when innocent and happy, never fails to soften and elevate, Edith, to all but the one so loved, was the same as ever—proud, unamiable—still wearing a look and using a tone that forbade the least approach to familiarity, and almost excluded sympathy.

At first, when Basil's illness assumed an alarming appearance, she would volunteer to sit with him; but there was none of that self-negation so needed in the sick room; she was never ready to take the tone from the invalid; she would read to him, but never varied the subject by an original remark, or lively digression; and Basil soon felt that her thoughts were not of him or the book; for she never noticed that he was weary, and that the effort of listening had become a positive fatigue.

How different from Percy, who, with such intuitive tenderness, at once understood his feelings. And so it came to pass, when the latter arrived at the Chase, and stationed himself in her brother's room, Edith willingly regulated her visits, so as to avoid meeting him there, for between her and Percy there was little sympathy or congeniality. In almost every respect they were dissimilar; and a childish feud, arising from the dictatorial airs Edith gave herself, on the strength of a

year's seniority, and her indifference to Basil, had never subsequently been made up; and, though Percy was now too well bred to fail in the set forms of politeness to any one, and much too grateful to Sir Rupert to offend his daughter, he owned to himself that Edith was the plainest and most disagreeable girl he had ever met.

On learning of the trial that was too surely at hand for Lady Rochedale, both Isabel Malcolm and Miss Durnsford had offered their services, which were gratefully declined; both now renewed this offer; but she still said—
“Not yet.”

Nor was Minnie's sympathy withheld at this hour of sorrow. She had her aunt's permission to come home, if her presence would be a pleasure to Edith; but Edith, also, preferred being alone—alleging, as the chief reason, her reluctance to interfere with Minnie's pursuits; and reminding her, that when the autumn came, she would return to England for a permanence, and would then, she hoped, accom-

pany her and her parents to Scotland. For Edith had taken another step in experience ; she had begun to feel some of the anxieties of love. At first, it was all a vague sense of delight — the pleasure of loving was itself sufficient ; but, gradually, Edith awoke, with a start, from her dream—something had whispered—“Am I loved in return?” and a pang seized her, as she failed to recal any token that justified an answer in the affirmative.

She thought of Gerald's manner. That was always charming ; but, alas ! it had been the same to her mother as to herself ; and truth, that will receive no bribe—that speaks, regardless of the pain it may inflict—went still further ; for, in remembering, with singular accuracy, every turn and expression of those perfect features, Edith almost shuddered, as memory brought before her, looks bestowed on others, for which she would have given untold treasure ; and though she had never seen Gerald in company with any one, to whom he

paid particular attention, there was a strong impression, that *if* he loved, his manner would at once remove all uncertainty.

Under the influence of this incipient jealousy, Edith strove to picture Minnie such as she now was ; but she only saw the pretty fair girl, looking more a child than she really was ; and she raised her eyes, and glanced at the tall dignified figure reflected from the mirror, and a smile lighted up her face, and banished its usual hard expression, as she compared her stately, womanly form, with the baby prettiness she remembered in the other.

Edith, thou art, indeed, a novice in love, if it has not taught thee humility—thou hast indeed a hard lesson to learn, if thou dost not dread danger everywhere. Foolish, credulous girl ! that dost still hope without the least foundation ! But this feeling of vanity could not be lasting, when all was uncertainty and contradiction—therefore, she fixed a distant period for Minnie's visit.

London was now preparing to put on its holi-

day attire, and was busy with its fashions ; and though, of course, the Rochedales did not intend to leave the Chase, Edith knew that Lord Blaymore would spend Easter with them, and it by no means suited her to have Minnie at hand to share his attentions. She could safely accompany them to Scotland, and perhaps before Christmas, would be with her aunt, or settle in some family.

“ I have for some time been wanting to speak about Maggy Wilson,” said Mrs. Cleveland, the first favourable opportunity that offered after Basil’s death, and when Sir Rupert and Lady Rochedale were both present; “ probably you know that for the last two years she has been very often at the Parsonage, and I assure you, that Mr. Cleveland, as well as I, thinks the day has lost something pleasant when she is absent. We have now no children,” she added, quietly ; “ and unless the proposal should interfere with your views, I should like to take charge of her — I will educate her as I did my own child; and, though

I cannot promise her a fortune, I will bring her up to be independent. Of course, I by no means contemplate an entire separation between her and her worthy mother—for this will divide them much less completely, than if she were sent to school.”

Lady Rochedale, who had offered no interruption, now made no reply—she had glanced at her husband while Mrs. Cleveland spoke, she did so when she ceased—and, though she felt pained to perceive the embarrassment of Sir Rupert’s looks and manner, she remained quiet. At last he said—

“You have partly anticipated me in referring to this child, though the kindness of your proposal is far greater than I could have imagined. She has claims upon us of long standing, and, though one important uncertainty regarding her, originally prevented me from taking a decided step, it is no excuse for my recent procrastination. You, of course, know that she is not related to the excellent woman who has so ably discharged her trust.”

Mrs. Cleveland bowed assent, as he seemed to pause for a reply.

“She is well born,” he continued, “though her father’s prodigality has left her destitute both of fortune, and of aid from his family. But she has now, herself, made fresh and solemn claims upon us, which I am sure we gratefully acknowledge. I once thought of another plan, but that ——”

He hesitated, and abruptly added—

“Every consideration is due to Mrs. Wilson, and I am sure, in your arrangements, she will not be neglected. I leave all the details to be settled by you and Lady Rochedale, who shares all my feelings. Mr. Cleveland and I will arrange the rest.”

And, in this instance, Lady Rochedale fully merited his trust, for, as her conscience reproached her for not having seconded the other plan; which she at once divined was, that Maggy should reside at the Chase; so much the more did she try to silence its upbraidings, by making Mrs. Cleveland feel,

that, instead of the poor cottage child, she had adopted one loaded with superfluities.

Gently trying to stem the full tide of her ladyship's munificence, she reminded her that Maggy was coming to the Parsonage, not to the Chase—a remark that sent a blush into the pale cheek, and made her bitterly repent the unpardonable waywardness, that had lost her this opportunity of so greatly pleasing her husband.

It was not well done of her, for, since their dear boy's death, there had been a unity of feeling that was very consolatory. They had, it is true, been sad together before now, but this last grief had been attended with circumstances of peculiar sorrow. Time, also, had softened the sternness of character in one, and the asperity in that of the other. Less reserve had induced less mistrust, and developed more affection; so that, when Sir Rupert raised the fainting form of his wife, and led her from Basil's death-bed, she wept uninterruptedly on his shoulder, and felt that to do so was a blessed privilege.

Under the influence of these better feelings, and fully resolved no longer to delay his plans regarding Maggy, he thought he would relate the whole of her story to his wife—seek her advice, and be guided by it; and had he done so, it is not assuming too much to assert, that Lady Rochedale had enough of woman's nobleness—enough sense of duty, and strength of love, to have met him half-way; and the mysterious cloud which, for years, had dimmed their happiness, would have rolled entirely away.

Procrastination is not the thief of time only. It steals away our comfort—it robs us of our opportunities for performing duties—it is the pilferer that snatches away the pleasant reflection of a life well spent.

How glad Lady Rochedale would have been, could she, on next meeting her husband, have expressed a wish to keep this child with them; but again she lost the opportunity—it was too late; or, as she thought, too late; for Mrs. Cleveland had left her under the impression,

that Maggy would very shortly be established at the Parsonage ; and had gone home thinking that once more a child's dancing-step would flit round the room ; and a child's voice again make music in their home and hearts. Once more, she had said, she and her husband should call that best of helpless living things their own, and a child would love them.

Nor was this to be a selfish pleasure, purchased at the expense of another ; nor were the prior claims of Mrs. Wilson forgotten or disregarded ; she was not only willing to give up a large portion of her darling's society, but she was anxious that nothing should interfere with the advantages of this change ; she had long felt, that unless Maggy were intended to fill a very inferior station, *she* was now unable to qualify her for a higher ; now they should meet almost as usual ; and her sunbeam would still come and bring light and joy to her fireside.

CHAPTER XVIII.

‘Oh, that those lips had language! life has past
With me but roughly since I saw thee last.
Those lips are thine—thy own sweet smile I see.’

COWPER.

AFTER an interview with Mr. Cleveland, in which the intentions the baronet insisted on carrying out, astonished him no less than the lavish arrangements of his lady, had his wife, Sir Rupert sat down; and when he reflected on what had just passed, he felt greatly re-

lieved to find that circumstances had hastened a crisis, which he had long felt must sometime arrive. The one doubt to which he had referred, as preventing a settled plan from the first, was his uncertainty regarding the existence of the child's father.

Though Sir Rupert had seen Captain Danvers only a few times, all he could remember of his manner, sentiments, and general character, impressed him with a firm conviction that he was not a man likely to neglect his child—or to suffer it to be dependent on the bounty of the one he had so grievously injured. If Captain Danvers lived, he would certainly claim her—where, then, was the use of laying any plan? Thus months passed on, but still no interference; and when another year elapsed, Sir Rupert decided that Captain Danvers must be dead. And thus, gradually, the excitement of the affair diminished. All seemed quiet, and Sir Rupert's conscience became quiet also. But now this apathy, this indifference must end.

He rose, and locked the door of his private room. Once before, many years ago, he did the same—now, also, as then, he applied the small key to the carved case, which, though covered with the accumulated dust of twenty years, showed a thinner layer on the very places from which he had then disturbed it. He carefully examined the key, and removed from the wards all that had before interfered with its use. A dark shade came over the fine but harsh features, on which sorrow had lately left deep traces, and a sigh burst from him as he let the folding-doors fall aside—for he gazed on the portrait of Alice!

How long he gazed, he could not have told, for that look recalled the memory of the time when he experienced the extremes of joy and sorrow—the time when he had indulged in the delightful hope of calling Alice his own, his beautiful bride, his adored wife! the time when he had been cruelly roused from this happy dream, to find that it was but a dream, and nothing more, save that it left the rankling

sting, that for years checked generous confidence—peaceful trust—and weakened all on which the feelings so gratefully repose.

How innocent she looks ! and yet, she had thrown a blight over his existence. How ingenuous is the expression ! and yet, she had cruelly deceived him. He gazed, and remembered all, even to the trivial circumstance which he had remarked to the artist. There was a look of melancholy in the portrait, not seen in the original ; but the painter had maintained its accuracy — and reverted to one particular day, when Sir Rupert had accompanied Mrs. Rochedale Bevington, as being the first time he noticed what, he thought, improved the beauty of the face : was it caused by remorse at the step which she then meditated ?

Well, too, did he remember his delight when this likeness arrived at the Chase—how he sat and looked at it ; and he shuddered, as again, in imagination, he read the tidings which, soon after, fell as a death-blow on his

happiness. Oh, the miserable, miserable, hours of agony that ensued ! He pressed his hands on his eyes, and wept ; but this did him good ; he felt grateful that the fiery ordeal had been passed, and that lately he had found peace elsewhere ; nor would he risk its loss by the neglect of this one duty.

The child of Alice had a solemn, almost a mysterious, association with the two beings on whom he had bestowed his warmest affections. She was closely linked with them both ; the thought of her was inseparably connected with the last moments of each ; her face was the last on which Basil had looked with consciousness ; her voice the last whose tones had fallen on his ear. She should, therefore, be neglected no longer.

With a calmness that surprised himself, he once more looked at the portrait, and, after having carefully dusted and closed the case, he rang the bell.

“ Is Mrs. Wilson, or her little girl, here ? ” he asked.

“Mrs. Wilson has just gone, sir ; but little Maggy is in the housekeeper’s room.”

Maggy !—his own servant to call her so—but under the influence of chastened and improving feelings, he checked his rising annoyance. His was the fault, he must pay the penalty.

He, therefore, merely said—“Send the child to me.”

Great was the astonishment of good Mrs. Scott on receiving this unexpected order. She looked at Maggy, and was glad to see she had on her best suit of mourning. So far it was well ; but then, the poor child, who had wept herself pale, and had really been ill from grief, looked so little likely to excite interest, that she determined herself to conduct her to the library, and apologise for the fact, by hinting at the cause. So, tapping at the door, she introduced her charge, remarking—

“Thomas says, sir, you want little Maggy ; but the poor child has cried herself white ; and ——”

"Thank you," interrupted her master, this allusion increasing every kind impulse ; "when I ring, send some one to fetch her."

And, curtseying herself out, Mrs. Scott was so deeply engaged in speculating on her master's intentions, as to whether it was a book, or toy, or money, he meant to give the child, that she knocked her head against the swing door, and was forced to have recourse to vinegar and brown paper, before she could again plunge among the stores, which had been sadly neglected during the recent melancholy event.

Perhaps Sir Rupert never had felt more awkward and embarrassed, than when left alone with his cousin's orphan. Fortunately for him, there was, at the first glance, but little resemblance between the radiant beauty of the mother, and the diminutive figure and wan aspect of the child ; but when, awe-struck at her interview with one well known, yet quite a stranger, Maggy raised her eyes, the look of timid wonder was so exact a transcript of that he had just recognized in the portrait, that a

thrill went through his heart, which was rapidly warming towards his helpless dependent.

“Your friend, Mrs. Cleveland, has been telling me, that you are a very good little girl,” he said, kindly holding out his hand—a smile and a very faint tinge spread over her face, as she took, and retained it.

“She says you work very neatly; and I know that you can read and sing,”—and, remembering the affecting circumstance, during which he had acquired this knowledge, an irrepressible feeling of gratitude made him place her on his knee, and caress and smooth her hair.

“Do you?” enquired Maggy; for though shy to strangers, none who were kind to her ranked in that class—they were her friends immediately; and with them, there was neither timidity nor reserve—therefore, she asked the question in so natural and frank a tone, that Sir Rupert was at once placed at ease, and found himself questioning and listen-

ing with a freedom and interest he had never expected to feel.

Ah ! those hearts are not quite hard that acknowledge—even though late—the claim of helplessness ; they are not altogether wrong who feel the influence of innocence.

Why had he so long denied himself this pleasure ?

When, therefore, he proposed to lead her to Lady Rochedale, she fearlessly took his hand, and went with him.

“ I have brought you a little girl, to whom we are all very much indebted,” said he, addressing his wife, and looking also at Edith, who was arranging some flowers in a *jardinière*—the latter coldly glanced over her shoulder, and resumed her occupation. Her father’s brow contracted, but this time, before it was too late, Lady Rochedale hastened to the rescue—for she saw the frown ; and, leading Maggy to the sofa, she kissed her, saying—

“ She is a most kind and friendly little body, and we shall, all of us, like to see her very often.”

This was as it should be—and greatly pleased her husband; who was also glad to perceive that his young relation, dressed very neatly in mourning, looked by no means out of place in that elegant room. He remarked that there was nothing vulgar in her movements or manners—on the contrary, though small for her age, there was an elasticity and ease in the former, that indicated nothing dwarfed or stunted in the fairy conformation; while she behaved with a quiet freedom that was almost graceful.

After a short conversation with Lady Rochdale, who had drawn her out by talking about flowers, and birds, and especially of a doll, which had met with a sad accident by being put before the fire one very cold day, the bell was rung, and she was dismissed; Sir Rupert scarcely able to repress a smile at the unconscious distinction and irony of her farewell. She kissed him and his wife in her own loving way, softly laying her cheek to theirs; but, though Edith gave her no sign of adieu, and

had not taken the least notice of her, Maggy made her a curtesy as formal as if in the presence of royalty.

“Edith, my dear—I think you can hardly have remembered who that child is!” said her mother, very gravely.

Sir Rupert was too angry to speak, but was glad that his wife had.

“Oh! yes, mamma, I did; she is Widow Wilson’s little girl! I did not know that I was expected to notice our servant’s children!”

“I should expect you to notice anyone who is associated with such touching recollections, and who, young as she is, has laid us under obligations we can never forget.”

And Lady Rochedale’s voice faltered.

“I am sure I am quite ready to do anything for her, you or papa wish,” was the more gentle reply; “I will buy her a doll, or books, if she prefer them, the next time I drive out; but I really thought you had fully recompensed her mother. I had no idea she was to be introduced to our society.”

Sir Rupert was now thoroughly provoked at the caustic tone of the last unlucky remarks.

“She was allowed readily to be introduced to a scene from which you shrank; she was permitted to perform services which should have been your sad and solemn duty; and, though the beautiful nature which prompted this devotion, doubtless, has its own reward, we—all of us—must be ungrateful, indeed, if we could let that suffice; though no one, of delicate feeling, would think any pecuniary recompense, an equivalent for sympathy so freely given. Besides, you have yet to learn that this despised child is as well born as you are”—(Edith looked up, incredulous)—“yes, quite as well; quite your equal. Her father squandered two fine fortunes, but he was, for all that, a gentleman; and, though I have hitherto neglected my duty, Mrs. Cleveland has so nobly reminded me of my deficiency, by her generous offer to perform it for me, that I can no longer be easy unless I share in her kindness—this is, also, your mother’s feeling.

"Quite—both my feeling and my wish," said she, emphatically.

Edith winced under this severe rebuke; still, her untractable spirit struggled to prolong the contest, and she was on the point of asking,—in her hard, unmoved tone—"And who, then, was her mother?—and had her spendthrift father a name?"—when, happily, she was stopped by Sir Rupert's grave and angry look.

The same question regarding the mother, perhaps, hovered on the lips of Lady Rochdale. Evelyn, of course, she concluded, was the father's name—but who was her mother? Was it any interest in *her* that prompted Sir Rupert's interference? He spoke of neglected duty—had Mr. Evelyn been his friend?—why, then, all this mystery?

But she also kept silent; and, as no other opportunity offered for resuming the subject, the mystery, to her, remained unexplained.

And Maggy became an inmate of the Parsonage.

CHAPTER XIX.

'Such wayward ways hath love, that most part in
discord
Our wills do stand, whereby our hearts but seldom do
accord.
Deceit is his delight; and to beguile and mock
The simple hearts which he doth strike, with froward,
diverse stroke,
He causeth th' one to rage, with golden burning dart;
And doth allay with leaden cold, again the other's
heart.'

EARL OF SURREY.

"THIS is a rather strange whim of Minnie's,"
remarked Edith, one morning early in August,
as she folded up one of those closely written
and crossed letters, which few but very young
ladies achieve. "Without assigning any rea-

son, and in a sort of hurried postscript, she says, she regrets that she cannot accompany us to Scotland, for that she has obtained her aunt's permission to remain longer in Paris. It is really very tiresome!"

"Very disappointing, certainly," replied Lady Rochedale, "for, like you, I quite long to see her—but, perhaps, it is not so very strange. Minnie naturally wishes to obtain all the advantages she can; and it is probable that some opportunity for doing so, was now offered. It is clearly a sudden change, for in my last letter from her aunt, there is no mention of it; but, as Miss Durnsford is expected to arrive early this morning at the Parsonage, for her long-promised visit, drive over and obtain particulars—should your papa visit London, next spring, I shall find it doubly agreeable to have Minnie's company, while you accept Mrs. Malcolm's *chaperonage*; for, though I have no wish to mix much in society, I shall not interfere with your doing so."

"I had no idea that papa had any intention

of leaving the Chase," remarked Edith, her heart beating with pleasure at the mere thought of London.

"On your account, if your papa should not object to the journey, I shall not," said her mother, looking at her own deep mourning dress, and sighing to think that he for whom she still so wept, had been dead many months; "we neither of us mean to allow our feelings to interfere with what is due to you; indeed, for your papa's sake, I should almost propose this plan; he is far from well—and, like me, does not soon forget."

If the last words sounded like a covert reproach to Edith, well had she merited the censure; and it was no slight addition to her mother's grief for Basil's death, that she found no compensation in Edith's sympathy or warm affection; not that she did not weep when this last brother was taken from her—she did; and for some weeks was unaffectedly sad; but there was no redoubled attention to her mother—none of that silent, unobtrusive care,

which falls like balm on the wounded spirit ; there was no token that she understood her sorrow, and shared it. And more than ever, Lady Rochedale felt how lonely she was ; for, though unspeakably thankful for the increased tenderness of her husband, there was too much habitual reserve in both of their characters, for either to profit largely from the real worth and affection of the other.

What a rich boon would the treasure of Maggy's love have been, young as she was, had Lady Rochedale been wise enough to have secured it ! but it was, apparently, her evil fate to miss every golden opportunity for winning confidence and affection.

“ If that is Gerald who is walking yonder, he can drive you to the Clevelands,” said she, looking towards a gentleman who crossed the distant lawn ; and, before Edith could reply, Lord Blaymore, who was spending a short time at the Chase, for grouse-shooting, seeing his aunt and cousin, raised his hat, and advanced with a smile.

"Will you drive me to the Parsonage?" asked Edith—"I have a message for Miss Durnsford, who is very likely there by this time."

"Miss Durnsford! The Parsonage!" exclaimed he, the utmost astonishment depicted on his countenance. "That, surely, is impossible."

"So little impossible, that Mr. Cleveland was to meet her this morning; so very likely, that I fully expect to find her already arrived. She has been visiting the Dean's lady, and spends a few weeks here before we start for Scotland. You will soon find that it is possible, when you see her."

"Very true," he replied, abstractedly.

"Oh!" remarked Edith, laughing, and in spirits that jarred painfully on her mother's feelings; "I understand now, very clearly, why you said it was impossible." He started, and as she playfully stopped to remark his confusion, coloured violently; "your wish was father to the thought. Mamma," she con-

tinued, addressing her mother, who had scarcely attended to the conversation, "Gerald is afraid to meet Miss Durnsford; conscience makes him a coward—just look at him," as he turned towards the window, annoyed at her persiflage, but she gaily intercepted him.

"For what has his conscience to reproach him, as regards Miss Durnsford?" quietly asked Lady Rochedale.

"Have you, then, forgotten all his crimes and misdemeanours, when we were in London? If so, courage, Gerald, and hope Miss Durnsford's memory may be equally treacherous." And Gerald, as if re-assured, composedly threw himself on the sofa.

"Oh! mamma—do you not remember how he used to baffle her vigilance, and take us to all sorts of places: that archery meeting, to which we should never have gone, if Gerald had not managed so cleverly; and that *déjeuner*, where we were so disguised, that no one recognised us. Poor Miss Durnsford was perpetually finding her precise plans upset,

and all through his generalship. No wonder he fears her."

"No wonder, indeed!" replied her mother—"but no great harm, either; happy for him if he never did worse; but he can now make honourable amends, by offering to convey any parcel she may have for Minnie. I think you said you were going almost immediately to France," addressing her nephew, "and, as Miss Durnsford's niece remains in Paris longer than we expected, perhaps you will take charge of some trifling presents, birthday gifts, and such small articles."

"I shall willingly take charge of anything," he answered, evidently making an effort to appear gay—"but you must not be sure that I shall deliver it. The French say, Paris is France; you, my dear aunt, seem to think France is Paris. I shall not go near that city, for ours is a yachting expedition—but I can manage to have it safely delivered into the very hands of your friend. Young Lankaster, who is quite a squire of dames, will be de-

lighted to have so legitimate an excuse for peeping and prying into one of these French sanctuaries—so he shall be carrier. But pray, who is the little girl to whom you are sending cakes and toys?”

“Why, Gerald!” began Edith.

“Do not be deceived by his affectation, Edith,” interrupted her mother, smiling—“he has not forgotten Minnie Durnsford, I am sure—the pretty girl he so often smuggled to unlawful parties, as well as you.”

“What! the little blue-eyed creature in a pinafore, seated in a high chair?” laughed Lord Blaymore.

“The young lady nearly as old as your cousin; and, by this time, I have no doubt, very much improved in beauty as well as in accomplishments. We permit no disparaging remarks on absent friends—do we, Edith?”

But Edith did not reply.

“If that be so,” said Lord Blaymore, “she will gain by the substitute I send. Lankaster is very rich, just one-and-twenty, and ready

to fall in love with any or every pretty face ; and, really, now I think seriously of it, the arrangement is as good as if it had been planned by a manœuvring mamma, with six unattractive daughters to marry off. Who knows, but that this Miss Minnie may come back the honourable Mrs. Lankaster, *in posse* or *in esse*. Whereas, a lord like myself, with a small rent roll, would be sure to sigh and languish in vain."

This speech chased away the unbecoming gloom from Edith's face, which her mother's words had caused to settle there. She was provoked, beyond the power of keeping her temper, at the ill-timed, ill-judged proposal, that Gerald should refresh his recollections of Minnie, which she hoped were very vague—though not, perhaps, to the extent he pretended. But his reply set all to rights ; and something, in his allusion to his own diminished income, fell on her ear with a pleasing sound ; and, to do her justice, for the first time, Edith became conscious of her changed

position—and that, by Basil's death, she was probably an heiress; and a glow of satisfaction was felt, as she stood at the window, and gazed over lawn and park; along wood and meadow, and knew that these all formed a part only of the wide-spread Chase.

CHAPTER XX.

‘ As mine own shadow was this child to me,
A second self, far dearer and more fair;
Which clothed in undissolving radiancy
All those steep paths, which languor and despair,
Of human things, had made so dark and bare.’

SHELLEY.

“ HERE they are!” exclaimed Mrs. Cleveland, as, some months after Maggy’s domestication with them, she and her husband were sauntering in the shade of their well-kept garden. “ I hear Pet’s joyous bark announcing the return of his mistress, and now the trot of my pony, and now the sound of wheels. Well,

dear child, and where is your mother—I hope you have brought her?”—as a slight figure bounded into the garden, closely followed by the dog.

“Oh, yes! she was delighted to come, and is busy shaking the dust off her best silk, and unpacking her cap. I ran in to say, I have not told her about the song. I mean it to be a surprise, so keep the secret.”

“Very well;” and, with the politeness of true benevolence, both Mr. and Mrs. Cleveland hastened round to the hall door, to greet their visitor, and to make her feel herself an honoured guest, whose presence gave them real pleasure.

“What have you brought in that hamper, I saw James carry so carefully?” asked Mr. Cleveland, when Mrs. Wilson entered with his wife, looking the very picture of neatness, in her snow-white widow’s cap and black silk gown, over which was an apron of the same material. “I have already asked Maggy, but she is as mysterious as a Freemason’s Lodge,

and does nothing but tantalize me with her 'nods, and becks, and wreathed smiles;' only look at her!" as Maggy put her arm round Mrs. Wilson, and, laying her finger on her lips, smiled again.

"There are only a few preserves I have done for Mrs. Cleveland, and some currant wine, I hope you, sir, will accept. Mr. Percy says mine is very good, and I have plenty left for him when he comes, which I hear he will, with the family, next month."

"You have guessed my weakness in favour of home-made wines, or did that little traitress betray me? On Sundays I never take any other; it helps to keep me in voice when I feel exhausted, and often, very tired; so I accept your present with many thanks."

It was delightful to see how perfectly happy Maggy was with her new friends; and yet there was not any diminution in her affection towards her earlier protectress—towards her who bore with her fretful infancy, who guided her tottering steps, who trained her opening

mind, and regulated her childish feelings. Oh, no! there was too much love in that young heart, to make it necessary that it should be withdrawn from the dear, kind friend of early days, because she had found others to love; there was enough for them all. Her heart was like the purse of Fortunatus; draw upon it for love, as you would, there was still love left for the next claimant: and it is quite true, that the older she grew, and the more she became able to understand the vast debt she owed to her right-minded nurse, the more was her love mixed with reverence for one so good and wise.

How happy she was to look over her list of friends, and add to it, the precious names of her new protectors — how delightful to glance, in fancy, from face to face, and see each wearing the expression, to her so infinitely dear — and to recall the tones of affection in which each addressed her.

The first time Percy came to the Chase, after Basil's death, he spent a part of many

days at the Parsonage ; and though, on remarking how at home she was there, he accosted her with—"Why, Maggy ! how came you here?"—there seemed so little incongruity between her and the place, that [he scarcely attended to her reply —"Oh, I live in two houses,"—for Pet, as usual, made himself conspicuous—and there was a net to be mended, and some flies to be made, which she did for him as handily as ever.

Still, even while basking in the warm sunshine of affection, there were times, when a dark and chilly cloud passed over her bright sky—fond, faithful memory it was that brought it—she looked for her idols, and lo ! one was removed ! And in the calm, solemn grandeur of departing day, when a hushed feeling seems to fall on the heart—'when the flowers fold up their tender leaves, and the little birds are at rest, each with his head behind his wing,' Maggy loved to think of Basil—of his gentleness — his kindness — his sweet uncomplaining patience ; and his memory

seemed to become dearer to her ; just as she fancied he himself would have been, had he lived.

But though this thought was always a cloud, it yet had its sunny side ; and often in the cheerful morning, when the dew sparkled on every blade and leaf, when the rising sun, and the renovated face of nature, spoke of an undying principle, of a pervading influence that is imperishable ; then would she think—“ though he shall not return to us, we may go to him.”

Gently went on the work of improvement ; gradually did the active mind acquire fresh knowledge ; while events and objects, which are too often ignorantly allowed to pass and leave no trace, were, by the judicious care of Mrs. Cleveland, made to serve their intended purpose—they were used to discipline some refractory feeling, or to impart some fresh truth.

Since his long visit to the Parsonage, during the cathedral reparations, Von Rüdiger, by

the advice and aid of Mrs. Cleveland, had resided rather more in the country. He was still near enough to the town to perform his duties there, but was, by this arrangement, able to enjoy all those rural associations for which he had a real enthusiasm.

“Ah! the master’s hand is here!” he would say, when rambling among the beautiful scenery near the Chase—“in the towns it is that of the pupil; here it is original—there only imitation; look, my friend, at those over-arching trees, see the grand vault of Nature’s rearing; look yonder at the colours of Nature’s blending — hark to the music of Nature’s breathing. Ah, Himmel! listen to the joyous notes of those birds—to that lullaby of the waterfall—pervading spirit! when all that thou dost is so exquisitely beautiful—when the mark of perfect loveliness is stamped on all thy works—on all but one—why is that one, originally made in thine own image, so defaced? but it will one day be again glorified; not here—no, not here.” And his voice

which was at first excited, would become soft, almost plaintive, while the clear blue eyes would gradually lose the look of bright inspiration, and become dim with tears. If, on these occasions, Maggy happened to be present, she would take his hand and gently press it.

“You have no idea how that girl disciplines my impatience,” he one day said to Mrs. Cleveland—“I can hardly bear to repress the wonderful talent she possesses; nothing but my real love for music enables me to check her; but, when we have once overcome the drudgery, and acquired the elements of science, then, ah! she is a made musician, and nothing will stop her.”

“I am quite aware of the ordeal through which you are passing,” replied she, with a smile; “but I am sure it is here, ‘*reculer pour mieux sauter*.’ I know you agree with me in thinking that an intelligent, well-stored mind, noble feelings, and a love of the good and true, are great adjuncts to the mere mechanism of music. Unaided by them, it

is without soul and poetry; it is merely sound, destitute of the power to awaken the least emotion. But we had a great treat last evening. Maggy fetched Mrs. Wilson to hear her play the duet with me,—and our concert wound up with the little song you gave her. I wish you had been with us. The next grand affair, I shall make a point of your coming.”

“I shall not think of refusing, if you are kind enough to invite me,” he replied; “but let me tell you the object of my present visit. I have lately become acquainted with a young lady and her father, who interest me greatly. He is blind; and it is her devotion to him that first attracted my notice. The loss of sight has compelled him to relinquish a very lucrative profession, and they now reside in that pretty house, two miles from the town, which you must have noticed, with willows drooping so gracefully over the gate. It belonged to his late wife. But there are very few here whom they know, and you can

scarcely imagine anything more lonely than the life which they lead must be to the daughter—indeed, not less so to him, as he has been accustomed not only to mix in good society, but to live among literary people, with whom his acquirements gave him a high place.”

“And you wish me to visit them ; but, my kind friend, you forget that I have only a pony carriage. Now, do not look as if you misunderstood and condemned me ; do not imagine that I *make* difficulties which you would never acknowledge. I shall willingly call on—what is their name ?”

“Mr. Pemberton and his daughter Sophia. I knew that your kindness would overlook distance ; and I think you will not regret the trouble.”

“To prove that I deserve your good opinion, should it be fine, I will call for you to-morrow, before three o’clock, and you shall introduce me ; but you must let me tell Miss Pemberton, why I cannot be a frequent guest ;

for the whole visiting will, probably, rest with me—unless they can occasionally come and stay a few days with us, should we succeed in establishing a mutual liking.”

“I hardly know about that—for I fear his infirmity keeps them both very much at home.”

Mrs. Cleveland named this contemplated visit to her husband, who added another motive to the promptings of her own kind nature, by saying that he had already heard of them from a young clergyman in the town, with whose family Mr. Pemberton had long been extremely intimate; and, from what Mr. Hammond had said, he felt sure this visit from Mrs. Cleveland would be much valued.

“Invite them over for a week,” he said, with his usual hospitality. “Mr. Hammond shall meet them, for the young lady seems to lead a sadly monotonous life.”

But this, Mr. Cleveland found would, at least for the present, be impossible. Mr. Pemberton’s calamity was of much too recent a date

for him to have acquired those independent habits, which, in the course of time, free blindness from so much of its anticipated helplessness, and so greatly mitigate its sufferings.

With Miss Pemberton, Mrs. Cleveland was much pleased. An air—a look of superior intelligence—a tone of extreme kindness—a tenderness and devotion to her father—all produced a most favourable impression ; and made the visitor inwardly resolve, that, difficult as it might be to see her often, when the distance *could* be overcome, no reluctance on her part should prevent them from “frequently meeting.

But though quite predisposed to feel an interest in the father, Mrs. Cleveland found it rather difficult to do so ; and, certainly, during this first interview, he excited no deeper feeling, than the sympathy which we cannot withhold from privation of any kind.

There was an egotism that seemed in constant activity—a remembrance of self that never slumbered—and no matter on what sub-

ject the conversation turned, he ingeniously brought it back to the old topic—his blindness. This was *apropos* to everything, and everything was made *apropos* to it.

When Mrs. Cleveland next saw Herr Von Rüdiger, she spoke of her visit, and the pleasing manners of Miss Pemberton; but, with her usual frankness, owned that her father had not produced the same effect. But how rebuked she felt for her want of charity, when he answered in his kind, considerate manner—

“Yes—I have perceived all that you have just said—and the constant claim that he makes on his daughter’s services and attention; but, while this made me only the more desirous to secure her the benefit of your acquaintance, this moral infirmity gives the father additional claims on our forbearance. He has not yet become accustomed to this terrible loss. In time, and as he gradually finds compensation, for the privation, in the greater acuteness of other senses, he will grow less helpless

and exacting ; or, if you prefer the word, less selfish."

"How beautiful is his universal benevolence!" thought she, looking at the gentle expression of his face. "How ingenious does it make him in excusing weakness, folly, error, —even wickedness, which, he believes, always brings its own immediate punishment."

And she smiled and held out her hand, saying aloud, in answer to his thought—

"I will try and not do it again."

CHAPTER XXI.

‘Alas! that it should e’er have been
The same in heaven as it is here,
Where nothing fond or bright is seen,
But it has pain and peril near.’

LOVES OF THE ANGELS.

“I FEAR you will think that I am treading on forbidden ground, my dear Fanny, and interfering with your province of *chaperone*; but it strikes me that Lord Blaymore is exciting more interest in the mind and heart of his stately cousin, than her father would approve of. Did you notice how restless and pre-occupied she was last night at the opera, while, in the opposite box, his volatile lord-

ship was smiling his most insinuating smiles at Lady Mildred Faulkland."

Thus spoke Mr. Malcolm as he sat at breakfast with his sister and wife, the latter of whom had undertaken the charge of Edith.

"Isabel thinks as you do," she replied—"but I must do Lord Blaymore the justice to say, that he seems by no means to pass the bounds of cousinship in his conduct to Edith. I do not think she is at all likely to attract him."

"I believe you are quite right in that remark," said Miss Malcolm—"a man of Lord Blaymore's fastidious taste is in no danger of becoming a slave to Edith's attractions; but his extraordinary grace and handsome person may very easily dazzle her. He is much more likely to make victims, than to be one."

"Hush—hush, Isabel!" said Mrs. Malcolm—and, turning to her husband, she continued—"She is prejudiced—you must not listen to her. Still, it will be most unfriendly in me, thus warned by you both, not to pause

and take council. Lady Rochedale trusts implicitly to me, therefore I am doubly anxious to merit her confidence. Already, I must confess to one error—Edith's haughty manner made me overlook the danger—and even now it appears to me inconsistent with her character to love first, supposing I had ever fancied she could love at all."

"Who is severe now?" cried Isabel; "and—oh! Fanny, Fanny!—what an avowal of utter ignorance, and in a *chaperone*, too! I believe Edith just the person to fall in love, without stopping to calculate the chances of a return. I believe, also, that when she does love, it will be once, and for ever. Under her pride lie strong passions. I have had many opportunities of noticing her, and —— but never mind; not even to Douglas will I hint at woman's inconsistency. But Edith, in some respects, strongly resembles her father, without, however, possessing many of his redeeming qualities. You remember, brother, there was a sad story of his love for the beautiful

Alice, who ran away, and is now quite forgotten. I have never ventured to name her, and it is my firm conviction that Lady Rochdale knows nothing of this early romance."

"Has she, then, never spoken of her, Isabel?" enquired her brother.

"Never, to me—and I could have told her very little if she had; but there is a latent jealousy in her character, which effectually seals my lips, respecting what I do know. A consciousness that this feeling is ever at hand, prevented me from trying to open her eyes to Edith's danger before they went into Devonshire. I thought she would be annoyed at anything like interference in family affairs. But this does not help Fanny. The question is, what had better be done?"

"If Edith really loves this gallant Lothario, I fear we are too late; and, unamiable as she is, I shudder to think of the consequences—even viewing the matter, in what she would consider the most favourable light—namely, that her love is returned."

“Sir Rupert would never consent to the marriage,” exclaimed Mr. Malcolm; “I am certain he does not approve of Lord Blaymore’s conduct. Surely, Isabel, Lady Rochedale would not feel offended at Fanny’s doing what is her duty—especially as her daughter’s happiness is its object.”

“I am not quite sure,” replied his sister, musingly; “but I heard her say yesterday, that her nephew was going abroad very shortly; though, should he be of the party at the Chase, during the autumn, I promise that I will speak directly I see there is need of my so doing.”

“Remember,” he observed; “that delays are dangerous.”

But, in the course of a few days, and without anything having occurred again to perplex Mrs. Malcolm, Lord Blaymore departed; and scarcely had he been gone three weeks when Minnie Durnsford unexpectedly arrived.

After the first burst of genuine pleasure, with which Edith had embraced her friend,

had subsided, and she had leisure to note all that time had done for her, she felt that the sudden departure of Gerald, which had cast a gloom over the remainder of the season—so far as she was concerned—was indeed a most fortunate event ; for it was impossible for Edith to look at the surpassing beauty of Minnie, and not instinctively to feel that she might have been a most formidable rival.

Edith had, at last, reached that phase in her love-dream, when fear, doubt, jealousy, by turns agitate and agonize. During this London visit she had had ample opportunity of seeing how the fascinating Lord Blaymore was received by all the pretty young novices of the season. Unlike the old and seasoned veterans — the husband hunters of the last four springs ; these silly, untrained, unsophisticated girls, actually preferred his attentions, to those of some wealthy antique — some noble old *roué*, who was doing penance for past iniquities, by now leading a decent life, and trying for a bargain in the marriage market.

They were simple enough to like the young lord better than the upstart, vulgar millionaire, who looked, and strutted as if quite aware that he had but to throw the handkerchief—to ask and have. It was from such as these that Lord Blaymore was sure to carry off the prize—till the more calculating mamma gave the lecture, and warning.

Especially had Edith been tortured by his glaring assiduities to Lady Mildred Faulkland, who was presented, as a bride, at the same drawing-room at which Edith made her *debüt*; and who was pronounced the most beautiful *blonde* of the whole assembly. Well did she remember the pang that seized her heart, when, a few days after this, she heard Gerald speak of her ladyship, and declare, that hers was exactly the beauty he so peculiarly admired—hers the graceful, delicately-proportioned figure he thought perfection; and her cheek grew pale, and her haughty head drooped, as she contrasted the beauty she so well remembered, with the face and form she

now saw reflected from the glass, and a deadly faintness would fall on her spirit as a glimmering of the truth appeared—that Gerald did not love her !

Then would she pace up and down her room, and struggle against a conviction so fatal to her peace. And she would think that the day might arrive, when he would weary of all this beauty and grace—when he would, perhaps, come and visit them at the grand old Chase, and where there would be no rival to mar, by her dangerous charms, the effect of her devotion, of her ever ready companionship, of her true and earnest friendship—for Edith was too proud, too true a woman to think of parading her love—and then he would, he must, learn to value and love her in return.

And Minnie ! she should be far away, with her aunt ; perhaps married ; but away from Edith she must be. With her, as a companion, she felt she had no chance.

Well might she come to this conclusion, for

more finished loveliness than Minnie's is seldom seen. The pretty child had expanded into the beautiful woman, adorned with all those graces which a careful education imparts. Most bewitching was she with her quiet elegance, her gentle tones, her shrinking timidity, and that exquisite blush which the least emotion sent into her delicate cheeks: all aided by a simplicity of dress, that defied criticism, in which,—though it was always appropriate to her style of face and figure,—there was a seeming *abandon*, that removed all idea of study.

Ah, poor Minnie! thou art but badly prepared for walking over the rough paths of life, with thy white satin slippers—thou art little able to ward off the blows of the world, with thy daintily-gloved hand. Poor girl! how will thy lace and muslin refinement endure the crushing and struggling of the crowd, into which thou art destined to be cast?

Listen!—be wise, and rouse thyself from thy sybarite slumbers; put on shoes of mail,

and, led by independence, resolutely step forth, and tread down impediments; draw on thy strong gauntlets, not to assail others, but to defend thyself; wrap thyself closely up in the warm and stout garments which industry presents to thee; and then thou art safe; but, if thou refusest—alas! alas!

Complaining of great fatigue, and a slight cold, Minnie, for several days, kept her room; and though, like all who looked at her, Lady Rochedale was dazzled with her rare beauty, she could not help thinking that, if her young favourite had gained in appearance, she had lost in spirits. Perhaps she regrets the friends she has left, was her mental remark; but though Minnie spoke very gratefully of her late associates, there was nothing more. Many of them were alluded to, but it was in the calm manner in which we speak of those who are merely acquaintances.

To Lady Rochedale, her arrival was quite an acquisition. On various pleas, Minnie declined most invitations, and devoted her-

self so kindly and unremittingly to her, that, though it left no need of Edith's society, her mother felt, perhaps, only the more, how entirely all companionship and sympathy had ceased between them ; and as closer association with Minnie confirmed her first impression, that the very measures taken, at so much cost, by Miss Durnsford, to qualify her niece for independence, had defeated her object—so did the wish arise, that this idea might be altogether abandoned, and Minnie be permitted to remain at the Chase, till an advantageous marriage removed her to a home of her own.

But when she named this idea to Edith, it was evidently so disagreeable to her, that Lady Rochedale, without enquiring into her objections, was silenced ; Edith seemed still to retain much kind feeling towards her old playmate ; and, it would be injudicious to weaken this, by insisting on a plan she disliked ; at all events, Minnie could remain till Edith positively objected to her society ; so it would be wiser to let the matter rest.

But Lady Rochedale, herself, became disquieted, as she found the same want of cheerfulness, which had struck her on Minnie's return, continue ; nay, perhaps, increase. There was still the same love of solitude ; and still the same look of deep dejection dwelt on the beautiful face. In vain did her ladyship torment herself to discover the cause. Perhaps, she now thought, Minnie has left a lover in Paris ; but the supposition seemed so improbable, when she remembered the close seclusion of the *pension* in which Minnie had been placed, and her aunt's wish that study should be closely pursued, that this idea was dismissed also ; and when she left town in order to spend a few weeks with her aunt, previous to the return of the Rochedales and their friends to the north, Miss Durnsford, ascribing Minnie's melancholy to regret at leaving the gaieties of London, decided that the sooner she turned her education to account, the better ; for, though Lady Rochedale had most kindly made her income quite sufficient for her own comfort

—it was not enough for two ; besides, Miss Durnsford asked, why should not her niece battle through life, as she had done ? She forgot that that niece had not passed through the same preliminary course of discipline.

CHAPTER XXII.

Tit.—"My lord, here is my bill."

Luc.—"And mine, my lord."

Phi.—"All our bills."

TIMON OF ATHENS.

WHEN the Rochedale family returned to the Chase, they were grieved to hear that Mr. Cleveland had lately been so much out of health, that he was anxious to try what change and complete rest would do ; therefore, the day after Sir Rupert's arrival, he called on him for the purpose of introducing the gentleman who had undertaken to perform his duties.

This was Mr. Hammond, the son of Mr. Pemberton's old friend, between whom and his own family, there had long subsisted the most affectionate intimacy.

Mr. Cleveland had often met the young clergyman at the cathedral town, but it was only after his wife had become a frequent caller on Sophia, that he had discovered the many good qualities, and valuable acquirements of his present substitute ; and he was much pleased to perceive that Sir Rupert appeared more than usually ready to bid him welcome, and recommend Percy to his companionship.

"And so you are going to run away almost directly we come back?" said Lady Rochedale to Mrs. Cleveland, the first time they met.

"We should have gone during your absence, and thus have reversed the arrangement ; but Mr. Cleveland did not feel justified in leaving his duty at that time ; though, I assure you, every week's delay has seemed very long to me, who have been watching his increasing indisposition. Had he persisted in trying to

perform his usual duties, I fear I should have been less quiescent. But Mr. Hammond is an excellent assistant, and I trust that you and Sir Rupert will find him entitled to your entire confidence, during our six weeks' absence."

"Mr. Percy Rochedale, who preceded us," replied her ladyship, "gives a most interesting account of him, and I hope that we shall often have the pleasure of his company. Percy's general associates, though always gentlemen, are rather wild and gay; therefore, it will be advantageous to him, to have a companion so highly esteemed by Mr. Cleveland. How is your little protégée, Miss Evelyn?"

"Quite well, I thank you," she answered, reminded by Lady Rochedale's formal designation that it was time to drop the familiar 'Miss Maggy,' now in general use,—“quite well—and one of the sweetest girls ever sent by Providence to fill a childless dwelling, and cheer lonely hearts."

Lady Rochedale sighed—partly, because she thought how lonely her heart often felt—

partly, because she had refused to find a place in it for this very child.

“I cannot think what is the matter with Percy Rochedale,” remarked Edith, one day, to her mother and Mrs. Malcolm; “he is as melancholy as Minnie, and the force of comparison can no further go. If it were not too absurd an idea, I should think he had taken it into his martial head to fall in love with her.”

“Melancholy must, then, be the only sign of love,” replied Mrs. Malcolm, laughing—“or else his love includes us all—not excepting our spinster sister-in-law; for his attentions are politely, but most justly distributed. But I have not noticed any difference in him, except such as we expect from one who has begun to find out that a soldier has something to do, rather more important than to dress so smartly as to plunge milliners into despair, and rival the gaudy hero of the stage. Mr. Percy has probably discovered that his duties are not all discharged, when he has waltzed with the prettiest girls, and flirted with the

richest. Our general, that is to be, must leave off playing at soldiers, and begin to work in real earnest—is not that reason sufficient for thoughtful looks ?”

Perhaps so—but Edith was right. Percy was out of spirits—and when he had, with much difficulty, made arrangements to precede Sir Rupert, and obtain the benefit of Mr. Cleveland’s advice, he had the sorrow of finding the latter so much out of health, that he could not think of selfishly troubling him with his affairs, though sadly in need of friendly aid. Mr. Hammond, who merited all the praises Percy bestowed on him, was too young to supply his place—was too recent an acquaintance, even if his clerical education had not, in this case, disqualified him for the office of Mentor. For Mr. Cleveland had been in the army, and Percy was sure that, in his present dilemma, his knowledge of life would be most valuable—for, gentle reader, Cornet Percy Rochedale was—in love?—no—nothing of the kind. What then?—far worse—for he was in—debt !

What! Percy Rochedale, the model young man, in debt! Fie! But Percy Rochedale never was the model young man—he would have been the one most surprised at the idea. But, model or not, he was in debt—nor will any sophistry diminish the disgrace—for it is peremptorily asserted that disgrace it is, to any one, to be in debt—yes, to any one; and none more keenly felt this truth than the young cornet—and the hot blood would mount to his forehead, and a sense of degradation fill his heart, as he thought of sundry bills lying in his desk, and a purse, empty at both ends, lying by them.

Little thought Percy, when accompanied by a brother sub, he lounged into the jeweller's shop; and—with a small air of dignity, that took wonderfully with the shopmen, and two young girls, who were choosing a guard ring, though it made the elderly mamma smile—little thought he, when he desired his bill might be sent in, as he was on the point of leaving town; that the sum total would look

so formidable ; and, when he tossed about patterns at the tailor's, he little expected that £. s. d. would head so long a column of superfine this—and extra-milled that—and rich satin fancy something else; but when a variety of small accounts—for nonsensical purchases now almost forgotten, or for pleasures that were quite—came floating in, Percy felt himself turn pale, as he thought that he had scarcely ten pounds left with which to pay them all.

The fact is, Master Percy had been figuring away—and a very handsome figure he was—at some parties and amusements, at which Lord Blaymore had enacted the character of *high-priest*—water-parties, racing-parties, pic-nics, and so on ; at which there had been much money spent, and little pleasure purchased—lots of champagne quaffed, and many a notebook cleaned out.

But let his lordship have fair play with us, if not with his associates. In the first place, he had introduced Percy to such persons and

amusements as, at least, had nothing directly disreputable connected with their character—though he never stopped to think to what, worse than themselves, they might lead. Percy, in many respects, pleased Gerald, who, though much older, liked his fine, high-spirited sentiments—his cheerfulness, and youthful daring; and actually thought that he was doing him a service, by thus gently initiating him into the ways of the world. And though, to one of his opinions and practice, as to money and debt, it would have made no difference, had he been aware that Percy's fortune was very small; still, he was *not* aware of this; for Sir Rupert's delicacy of feeling kept the world ignorant of his generosity to his young relative. However, as Lord Blaymore never fretted about his own debts, he troubled himself still less about the ways and means of his friends; so, from folly to folly, from extravagance to extravagance, Percy, before he was quite nineteen, found himself indebted nearly three hundred pounds!

How worthless seemed those amusements which had caused this!—how trumpery the baubles, the cost of which had swelled to this amount—and oh! how unspeakably despicable—how mean—how dishonourable did *he* appear, who had been led into this senseless waste! But in his case, as in all similar ones, comes the enquiry, how to remedy it?

The first time, after Basil's death, when Sir Rupert felt equal to a private interview with Percy, he invited him to his own room, and there a long and agitating conversation took place, honourable alike to the baronet's gratitude and generosity. After stating his intentions—for which Percy could not find words to thank him—Sir Rupert said—

“Your little fortune, my dear boy, since I have known you, remains untouched, except when it has been increased by adding the interest. Your advancement in your profession is my care—so, let this sum accumulate, till it can be advantageously employed. You have already said, that your allowance is ample.”

"Abundant!—abundant!" sobbed Percy.

"Very well; and it shall be increased as you need it. And you like your profession?"

"I glory in it, sir," he replied, dashing aside some drops from his eyelashes.

"That is as it should be; but Percy, my son, in all things promise to consider me as your father; and if ever, by any weakness or folly, you exceed your allowance; if ever, in short, you are in debt——"

"I never shall be, sir," he vehemently said, interrupting Sir Rupert.

But he, as if he had not heard, or as if his knowledge of the world made him attach but little import to the words, calmly repeated—

"If ever you are in debt, no matter under what circumstances, promise that you will inform me."

"I do promise," said Percy, raising his ingenuous eyes to his friend's face; "I promise faithfully."

And now this promise must be kept.

When Percy recovered from the first shock

of finding himself in debt, and thought how he should pay, he remembered what Sir Rupert had said of his originally very small fortune—namely, that it had been allowed to accumulate. Here, then, was a fund ready to pay, not only these debts, but sums many times greater. True, he was not of age, but he had not mixed in Lord Blaymore's set—he had not associated with his lordship himself, without having learned something that, at this moment, seemed well worth knowing ; and, though he had a notion that his meditated method of paying was, by some *hocus pocus*, paying twice or thrice over, “Never mind—these odious bills once paid, and never ——”

Percy rose, his heart beat quick, but he sank heavily on his chair, and pressed his hands to his burning brow, as he remembered the promise he had given, and felt that, if anything could add to its solemnity and sacredness, every circumstance, at that time, was calculated to do so.

“No—no,” he said, half-aloud ; “this is a

folly, of which I cannot be too much ashamed—to break my word would be a crime, involving base ingratitude to my best friend. I will tell him all—it shall be part of my punishment,”—and, though he winced at the idea of thus indirectly asking Sir Rupert to advance the money, he took courage, and felt that his anger, his well-merited anger, could be borne, but his contempt could not.

It was not, therefore, with the least intention of avoiding this disclosure that he intended to seek Mr. Cleveland’s advice ; but, he wished to consult him as to the best manner of making his confession. But, as has been said, Mr. Cleveland was an invalid, and busy with the preparations for his departure—so, perforce, Percy kept silent—and, perhaps, this week of suspense was more trying to him than any other result of his imprudence ; and, as it was impossible, when the party arrived, to seize upon the baronet at once, his discomfort seemed to increase every hour.


At the very moment when Edith made her

comments on his looks, he and Mr. Malcolm might have been seen slowly pacing along the beech avenue; engaged in, what seemed, a very interesting conversation; for while they were at breakfast, some remark made by Mr. Malcolm arrested Percy's attention, and induced him to scrutinize the intelligent countenance of the speaker, with unusual care.

His resolution was taken in a moment; and asking if he could spare him half-an-hour some time during that morning, he was glad to hear him reply—"Directly breakfast is over, I am at your service."—Then Percy told him all; how his folly began, increased, and flourished, as his finances became proportionably smaller.

"Very wrong of Lord Blaymore—very wrong, indeed, to introduce you to such a set," said Mr. Malcolm.

"I am the only one to blame," replied Percy; "the only or chief delinquent. I knew very well that it is through Sir Rupert's kindness that I occupy my present position.



He paid for my education ; he made me a handsome allowance, and every expense has been met by him. I really think my folly in running in debt scarcely more degrading than my ingratitude to him. But how shall I tell him what a contemptible idiot I have been ?”

“ Tell it in the language of truth, my young friend ; tell the whole truth—have no concealments. Go in, and put down every shilling you owe, no matter for what ; state the facts, and leave it to him to pardon or punish.”

And Percy did so, and Sir Rupert pardoned ; he did not punish—at least, he did not intend to do so : but, oh ! how humbled, how heart-wounded was Percy, when, as he proceeded in his tale, he saw the face, never stern to him, quivering with emotion ; and the hand, that was stretched out for the papers, trembling from agitation.

“ Percy Rochedale, have you here put down all you owe ?”—and the voice sounded to the conscience stricken youth reproachful—almost mournfully so.

"Every shilling, sir," he replied, without raising his eyes.

Sir Rupert slowly examined each item; how long it seemed! how odious did the rustle of the papers sound, as he turned to compare the bills with the list: then came a pause—no rustle, no sound—and Percy began to think this perfect silence still more intolerable; and he leaned his hand on the table, for he felt dizzy.

"Sit down, Percy;" the voice was low, but evidently sad. Percy stole one glance at his benefactor—his friend; their eyes met: the next moment the boy was on his knees, at Sir Rupert's feet, in an agony of contrition, and almost choking with suppressed sobs.

"Rise, Percy, rise: you distress me, my poor boy; did you, then, so fear my displeasure?"

"No, sir—no; I only feared your contempt—your sorrow."

"Come to my heart, noble boy, and let me be thankful that one still lives who under-

stands me. God bless you, my son! and grant that the agony you have experienced, may keep you from future imprudence; and, oh! dear Percy, remember that debt is the first downward step to ruin—happily, vice is always costly—and the want, the sorrow it brings, should warn and stop us in time. Leave these papers with me, for the present—but keep them carefully by you, and let the sight of them recall the events of this hour.”

“They shall—they shall! They shall be my talismans in the hour of temptation and danger; they shall help me to preserve that honour and independence, without which, life is a painful load.”

“Right—quite right. Now leave me.”

And gratefully pressing the friendly hand, that had so nobly helped in this sad strait, Percy went to his own room. He sat for a few minutes lost in thought, scarcely understanding the nature of the feelings that so powerfully, so painfully affected him—so pain-

fully, that he mistook it all for sorrow, and felt as if he never could be happy again.

Who has not gone through that ordeal, when, though relieved from the crushing weight of some great sorrow—some great dread—a numbing sensation still remains, and makes us half doubt whether the removal is entire? Who does not remember when the extremes of misery and happiness, so closely touched, so nearly mingled, that it was difficult to separate them, and say which preponderated? Who has not felt the bewildering sensation which follows, when one of the great, the important lessons of life, has been learned so as never to be forgotten? Who has not, once, at least, in his life, found it impossible to realise the full consequence of that single, solemn event, which leaves him a wiser and better man than it found him?

But Percy was young;—his, also, was one of those cheerful, hopeful temperaments, that carry the possessor more smoothly through life, than they can pass who anticipate evil,

and meet misfortune—not that he was destitute of deep feeling, strong passions, and fits of rash excitement, but the smile was more frequent and more becoming to his cheerful young face, than the look of thoughtful care ; therefore, after thanking Mr. Malcolm for his advice, and telling him the happy result of having followed it, there is nothing very inconsistent, if he then scampered off to the Parsonage, to borrow Maggy for a riding companion, after promising to return her in capital condition for her early dinner.

“ Why, you little kitten, you look almost pretty !” he said, as he helped her off her pony, and glanced at her cheeks, glowing with health and pleasure.

“ Do I ?” she quietly asked—“ does it make you like me better ?”

“ Not a bit—not a bit ;” he gaily replied—“ why should it ?”

CHAPTER XXIII.

‘ And she refus’d it with such confidence,
As if she had been prompted by a love
Inclining firmly to some other man.’

CYRIL TOURNEUR.

“I THINK Minnie has made a conquest,” remarked Mrs. Malcolm to Isabel, some six weeks after all the party were settled at the Chase.

“And I fear she has,” replied her sister-in-law, dryly.

“You fear?—how odd you are, Isabel.”

“In what way?—is it odd to fear that a

very beautiful girl should inspire a passion which she can never return ?”

“Nay ; you have passed oddity, and become mysterious ; and, though I know you long to speak out, you are going to make a favour of so doing—pray, therefore, oblige me with the real meaning of your very caustic remarks.”

“My meaning is not very obscure to those who have no husband to divert their attention from all other objects,” replied Miss Malcolm, smiling—“but I willingly give you the results of my old-maidish observation ; if ever there was a girl in love, it is Minnie Durnsford—but not with Mr. Hammond—of that I am sure ; and this is one reason for my saying, *I fear*. Another is, that even if her affections were disengaged. I should be sorry to see one who appears so amiable as Mr. Hammond—one, moreover, a clergyman—married to a girl like Minnie. You look as if you still thought me incomprehensible ; but, while I think every man makes a mistake when he marries a

woman who cannot feel an interest in his pursuits, though she may be unable to share them—to a clergyman, this error is tenfold more dangerous than to most others. Now just think, dear Fanny, of Minnie, and fancy her married to Mr. Hammond.”

“I have thought—I have fancied—and I see a beautiful, accomplished girl—gentle, loving, and amiable—the wife of a cultivated, intelligent, right-minded man. I see her in their pretty rectory, or where else you like, presiding at his breakfast-table, looking, as Minnie always does, as if fresh from the bath and toilette. I see her at his well-arranged dinner; and, in the evening, I hear her delighting him with her music—or, still better, with her voice. Do you object to my fancy?”

“Oh, no!—not in the least. As a fancy, it is very pretty; but do not attempt to realize it; for, I warn you, you will fail. Fancy, indeed,” pursued Isabel; “it is such pretty fancies as these that make half the miserable marriages between those of small means and

large imaginations. They fall into a blissful reverie, and see elegance, refinement, perfect taste—love in a cottage. They are roughly roused from this dream ; to look, with terror, at mismanagement, helplessness, and poverty, before whose evil eye love flies away. You have drawn your picture, now lend me your pencil. I see Mr. Hammond, in a house of the size and arrangement suited to his present limited income. I see his cheerful, affectionate wife, scrupulously neat, but dressed, and looking, as if she had had some hand in helping their one servant to prepare the morning meal, which she also helps to remove. I am going to shock you, Fanny ; but do not faint yet. She arranges her housekeeping for the day ; perhaps makes a pudding, or prepares some inexpensive luxury, for the one beloved ; who has most likely gone his parochial rounds, speaking peace to the troubled, and gently leading those right who have gone astray. Occasionally she accompanies him, her basket packed with well-chosen necessaries for the

sick and destitute. Her evenings are sometimes spent in reading, if alone ; or in working and listening to him. If she is musical, so much the better for the whole parish. But, if they are to be happy, in all things they must walk hand in hand together ; and then, when the eye seeth them, the tongue blesseth them. They are useful, and honoured in life ; lamented in death ; and leave the rich legacy of their example to others ! ”

Mrs. Malcolm did not reply ; she looked at Isabel, whose face was full of feeling, and was struck with the contrast of the two pictures.

After a moment's pause, Miss Malcolm asked—

“ Will Minnie do this ? ”

“ Oh ! no—I fear not—I am sure not—and yet she is very winning and amiable ! ”

“ So she is. I must be insensible to beauty and grace not to acknowledge it. Still you have no idea how unsatisfactory she is to me. There is a want of energy and substantiality in all she does, and says, and looks, that annoys

me. A false and dangerous sentiment—a sickly romance—an unsettled notion of duty pervade the whole—so that I do not trust her;—not that I think her actual character is false or artful; but, Fanny—mark my words—she is acting a part—there is concealment; and——but I most earnestly hope that she will refuse Mr. Hammond, for offer, I am sure he will.”

“He would not think that a very friendly wish,” remarked Mrs. Malcolm.

“He will not now, most assuredly; for who can, at the same time, be wise and in love?”

“Well, you have completely demolished my cottage *ornée*, in the air, for Minnie; but I feel that you are right. Perhaps her aunt’s plan, put in practice for a few years, would cure many of these defects, which, I fear, I must not deny.”

“If she could meet with a really sensible mother, who would work with her, it might; but, with all her accomplishments, I think her own education still very incomplete. Miss Durnsford, of whose good sense I have a high

opinion, made a mistake when she sent this pretty creature to Paris. Under her rather stern, but well principled direction, all that is now so weak in Minnie, would have been strengthened. Nothing would have made her like her aunt—that is not, perhaps, desirable—but she would never have had her mind filled with graceful nonsense, and elegant, sentimental trash.”

“But you must own, Isabel, that she is educated so as to fill and adorn any station.”

“Except that which common sense suggests as the one most likely to be hers. Nothing is more easy than to educate a girl fit to be the wife of a rich man. But, if we may judge by its rarity, the difficulty seems to be, to fit them for that far more numerous class—the poor gentleman’s helpmate. Believe me, accomplishments are not equivalents for a fortune—far less will they supply the place of those housewifely qualities, which make the husband think of his home with pleasure, and return to it with delight.”

The blind urchin has certainly taken lodgings at the Chase, and amuses himself by bending his bow at those who enter the gates; for a few mornings after the conversation, in which the merits and demerits of poor Minnie had been so freely discussed, a letter, sealed with the Bannersfield arms, was placed before Sir Rupert. As he read, a look of satisfaction appeared on his face; and about an hour afterwards, he and Lady Rochedale were seated in his private room.

“In every respect I am pleased with the offer,” he was saying; “the Bannersfield family and ours, have always been friendly. I have much respect for his lordship, and what I have seen of his son, predisposes me to like him.”

“But, Edith?” asked Lady Rochedale; “I am quite of your opinion—but she must decide.”

“Undoubtedly — on no account would I influence her, except by stating my own favourable opinion. Will you see her alone, or shall we send for her?”

"Let us be together," she replied ; "I do not fear any scene where she is concerned—but she may like to become accustomed to the idea, after hearing that the offer pleases us—not that she will affect this, if she does not feel it—only I think she is as little prepared for this announcement, as I was."

And Edith was summoned to her father's room ; scarcely wondering for what purpose. But her self-possession was a little disturbed when she looked at her mother, who was pale and agitated ; and when she saw an open letter in her father's hand.

"Nothing very alarming," said the former, with a faint smile—"nor anything extraordinary that Miss Rochedale's hand should be asked for."

Edith felt giddy—it was but for a moment, as her father, rising, and placing a chair for her, said—

"Read that letter, Edith ; and, if you like to have time for consideration, take it. Lord Bannersfield——"

What more he said she did not hear—a buzzing sound prevented her—but she mechanically took the letter, and seemed to read it attentively—it was only to gain time, and recover her thoughts.

“Of course, I am permitted to decide?” she at length asked—the only token of emotion being shown in a slight wavering of her voice.

“Certainly—remembering that both your mother and myself hope the offer will not be treated with caprice; and that we expect it will have the consideration it merits,”—for there was something so inauspicious in his daughter’s look and tone, that Sir Rupert felt annoyed.

“I am not capricious. I have already considered, and beg to decline the offer.”

A slight movement of impatience escaped her father.

“Perhaps, my dear,” suggested Lady Rochdale, “you will pause and reflect, before you give your final answer. Your papa has a very great regard for the family, and ——”

"No doubt, they all deserve his good opinion," interrupted she, coldly; "but I understood that I might decide—is it not so?" appealing to her father.

"It is," he replied, very gravely.

"Then, I repeat my refusal;" but, perhaps, struck by the grieved look of her mother, more than by the frown on her father's brow, she added, with some small show of feeling—"but permit me to express my thanks, for a liberty and indulgence which all are not favoured with."

Sir Rupert drew his desk towards him, opened Lord Bannersfield's letter, and commenced, what was probably, a reply. Lady Rochedale rose, and accompanied Edith out of the room, as the latter thought, for the purpose of expostulating with her; but not so—they parted in the hall; and her mother entered her dressing-room, much more sorry for the disappointment of her husband—in which she shared—than provoked with Edith for the uncourteous way in which she had acted.

As if this scene were not enough for one day, a few hours afterwards, Mr. Hammond called, and, as he thought, had the good fortune to find her ladyship alone. After much hesitation, but, finally, with very little circumlocution, he stammered out the motive of his visit, which was, to obtain her sanction for his love—her permission to address Miss Durnsford.

Had Lady Rochedale been in the mood for a jest, she might have asked—"Is not this the very atmosphere of love? Two suits in one day—will the fate of the first shadow out that of the second?"

She, however, said that, though feeling the most friendly interest in Miss Minnie Durnsford's happiness, she believed it due to her excellent aunt, to take no part in this affair till she had been consulted; still her ladyship thought she might remind Mr. Hammond that Miss Minnie had no fortune, and, indeed, had been educated with a view to secure her own independence by teaching.

Mr. Hammond here ventured to interrupt her. It was the knowledge of this fact, he said, which had emboldened him to make this offer; his own fortune was small, but his family had influence; and that morning he had had a duty proposed to him worth three hundred a year; it was only forty miles from the Chase, within reach of the valued friends there, and most beautifully situated. "I need not say," he added, "how happy I was as I read of this unexpected gift, nor will you, I hope, think that I grasp at too much, when I seek to double its value by sharing it with one whom I soon learned to love. Miss Durnsford is so gentle and retiring, so courteous to all, that I dare not flatter myself with having obtained any preference; still, she has never avoided me, and, if not now so highly favoured, in time she might—I mean, perhaps——" and he stopped, evidently affected.

Lady Rochedale had one little weakness, if such it deserve to be called; she never could

see any one suffering from a genuine affection, without wishing to comfort and cheer. She really liked Mr. Hammond, and, moreover, was by no means taken by surprise. For the last fortnight, she had suspected the feelings of Mr. Cleveland's agreeable substitute, and, more than once, had fervently hoped that Minnie's continued depression arose from no love, fancied or real, that would crush the young clergyman's hopes. It was, therefore, with much kindness of tone and manner that she said—

“Though not going to contradict what I said regarding any interference with Miss Durnsford's rights, I may say, with truth, that you have my good wishes for success.”

“And Minnie—Miss Durnsford, I mean,” he said, colouring.

“You must arm yourself with patience, and bear the delay. This morning she received news from her Paris friends, which has greatly distressed her. You need not look alarmed. I have prescribed quiet; therefore you must

not ask me to interrupt it. Nor do I think you ought to feel disappointed : I could not permit you to address Minnie without her aunt's sanction. And now let me dismiss you, for I think it will better advance your cause if I write to Miss Durnsford by this post. Perhaps, if I send my letter to the village, you may have one ready to accompany it."

"A thousand thanks for this unexpected goodness ; if you did but know——"

"And I have no time now to learn," she said, rising and looking at the clock ; and, his departure being accelerated by the hint, he bowed ; and with hasty steps returned to the village.

END OF VOL. I.

